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WITHDRAWN

*The
Eagle's
Shadow*

BOOKS *by* MR. CABELL

Biography:

BEYOND LIFE
FIGURES OF EARTH
DOMNEI
CHIVALRY
JURGEN
THE LINE OF LOVE
THE HIGH PLACE
GALLANTRY
THE CERTAIN HOUR
THE CORDS OF VANITY
FROM THE HIDDEN WAY
THE RIVET IN GRANDFATHER'S NECK
THE EAGLE'S SHADOW
THE CREAM OF THE JEST

Scholia:

THE LINEAGE OF LICHFIELD
TABOO
JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER
THE JEWEL MERCHANTS

JURGEN AND THE LAW
(*Edited by Guy Holt*)

THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

A Comedy of Purse-Strings

By
JAMES BRANCH CABELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

*"Ad hanc, inquam, aquilæ umbram illico pavitat
omne vulgus, contrahit sese senatus, observit
nobilitas, obsecundant iudices, silent theologici,
assentantur jurisconsulti, cedunt leges, cedunt
instituta."*

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To

MARTHA LOUISE PATTESON BRANCH

*In trust that the enterprise may be judged
less by the merits of its factor
than by those of its patron.*

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AN INTRODUCTION:
CONCERNING CABELL

BY
EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

An Introduction: Concerning Cabell

[This revised version of *The Eagle's Shadow* completes the uniform edition of Mr. Cabell's books. It has in consequence appeared appropriate to preface this volume with a consideration, not merely of *The Eagle's Shadow*, but of Mr. Cabell's work as a whole.]

§ I

“EVEN then I knew something of the occasional insufficiency of words,” says young Townsend in *The Cords of Vanity*, referring to the time when he was fifteen and neither women nor writing had come to be seen in their proper proportions.

The overlapping of the two identities named respectively Robert Etheridge Townsend and James Branch Cabell seems open to suspicion at least. Both have been mentioned by reliable authorities as responsible for a volume named *From the Hidden Way*, and Mr. Cabell's scrupulous habit of never quoting from it without giving due credit to the more or less fictitious character of Townsend may be nothing but a concession to his self-respect. At any rate, ever since a time hardly less distant, Mr. Cabell has striven notably, and not entirely with-

out success, to prove the occasional sufficiency of words when chosen by a mind whose professed passion is "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings."

It is this ever-dominating regard for the possibility of beauty in the written word that, more than anything else, distinguishes Mr. Cabell from the vast majority of American writers of fiction now living. A few of these possess the same regard, though hardly in the same degree, and strive earnestly to be guided by it, though rarely with the same success. The greater number seem totally to lack it, or else to scorn it as beneath attention. One of our wideliest known writers, whose style is eulogized in superlative terms and not always without reason, appears at times moved by a curious desire to find how far he can go in perversion of the language without becoming quite unintelligible. Others, hardly less esteemed and no less sincere, write as if form were a wholly subordinate, if not negligible quality. Still others simply pour out streams of words in the evident hope that, somewhere in the resulting chaos, the valid phrase will lie buried like a lump of precious ore, to be dug out by some more than ordinarily patient reader. And too many are impelled or swayed by the fashions of the day rather than by any authentic promptings from within their own natures.

In all such respects Mr. Cabell forms a most striking and reassuring contrast. Incessantly he returns to "writing perfectly of beautiful happenings" as the literary workman's passion and creed; and incessantly, without regard for time or labor or external considerations of any kind, he applies this creed to his own work, never leaving it until every part and particle of it, separately as well as in mutual relationship, have been brought to the last degree of attainable fitness. As one reads one luminous page after another, one is struck not only by the felicity of phrase and aptness of imagery that vitalize his most casual writings, but with what might be called the architectural immaculateness of the total work as well as of its minor and major component parts. Every word and sentence and passage stand subordinate to a carefully preconceived scheme that leaves no detail unattended and no ends hanging loose. No structural or ornamental device known to the skilled craftsman is overlooked in order to procure the exact effect aimed at, and this effect never stops at surface appearances, but has for its goal the conveyance of some mood, or picture, or idea, that in its turn stand similarly subordinated to the ultimate purpose lying at the heart of the completed work. Artificiality and laboriousness might be feared in the case of such construction, but instead the result

is a forward movement no less spontaneous than it is irresistible.

The sun has spots, and Mr. Cabell's style is not free from mannerisms that to some readers may appear pedantic and to others puerile. But even when he seems to slip, he generally does so with malice prepense, because he is aiming at a certain effect not obtainable to the same nicety in any other way. Like all craftsmen of the highest type, he is keenly conscious of what he does and how far his purpose is carried by it. And if once in a while the lure of a gemlike phrase leads him a little astray, the lure is likely to prove no less beguiling to the reader.

From his poetic beginnings Mr. Cabell has carried into prose sundry telling devices, among which the refrain must be placed foremost. In every one of his works one encounters recurring expressions that are woven into the text like so many Wagnerian leit-motifs, and every recurrence adds another link to the narrative or argumentative chain. They serve also to establish certain objective points so firmly that it becomes impossible to miss them or forget them. No modern advertiser esteems more keenly than Mr. Cabell the value of judicious repetition, but he knows in addition the trick of getting æsthetic as well as utilitarian returns on that value. In illustration may be mentioned his use of

the term *jeune premier* and the phrase of "pretending to be what seems expected" in his highly dramatic portrait of Richard Sheridan in *Beyond Life*. These two expressions confine one of the most astonishing careers recorded in modern history. By skillfully ringing the changes on them, Mr. Cabell carries us breathlessly from the first resplendent entry at Bath to the anti-climactic exit, with its amusingly convincing characterization of the completed career as "an extravaganza such as no thoughtful artist would care to perpetrate."

"In literature," Mr. Cabell once wrote, "a book's subject is of astonishingly minor importance, and its style nearly everything." One might find a proof of this assertion in his own work but for his equal attentiveness to all the three principal aspects determining the consideration of a literary production—form, contents and spirit. Because he realizes the lack of proper attention to form as the chief shortcoming of the literature into which his own work enters as an integral but atypical part, he has chosen to accentuate the importance of this fundamental aspect in time and out of it. But as far as his own work is concerned, this slightly disproportionate emphasis has never led to any negligence of the other two equally important factors. And the total result thus achieved may well be sum-

marized in the words used by Mr. Cabell to describe the "auctorial virtues" that, according to John Charteris in *Beyond Life*, serve best to insure a book against oblivion: "distinction and clarity, beauty and symmetry, tenderness and truth and urbanity." It is my own opinion at least, that Mr. Cabell's books are abundantly insured in this manner.

§ 2

In spite of his insistent championship of the literary tendency which he chooses to name Romantic, and which he places in sharp juxtaposition to a much detested and reviled Realism, Mr. Cabell himself is rather a Classicist, both in style and structure—and, of course, there is nothing more antipodal to the true Romanticist.

The most casual analysis of Mr. Cabell's books—any or all of them—discloses at once a rigidly perfected scheme of construction. Plot and style are equally subjected to this discipline from within. Typical are the poems contained in *From the Hidden Way*, said to have been written by Mr. Cabell in his teens as a preparation to his subsequent prose compositions. The metrical schemes of these poems are almost invariably derived from the intricate rigidity of form which allowed the poetry of the troubadours to fill a disciplinary purpose in literature somewhat akin to that which Scholasti-

cism served in philosophy. The inventors of so many poetic patterns that to-day have little more than historic interest were above all practitioners in perfection. And that is just what Mr. Cabell is, first and last, whether he write verse or prose, on themes derived from Lichfield or from Poictesme.

The closeness of thought and composition that mark his charming, but comparatively negligible poems, may be traced through any one of his prose works, *Jurgen* not excluded. There, however, they are accompanied by a richness of thought and fluent grace of form that prevent the underlying, carefully conceived pattern from obtruding itself. If, in this connection, there be any suggestion of adverse criticism at all conceivable, it is that the coruscating incisiveness of Mr. Cabell's style tend a little to divert the reader's attention from the very thought its aptness serves so well. Yet one could not wish it different in any way, for unchanged, it furnishes a never-failing source of pleasure, ever filling the reader with the peculiar sense of contentment that, like a divine aura, emanates from all perfect things.

§ 3

The most plausible explanation of certain resistances that have been shown to Mr. Cabell's work almost from the start, and that still crop out aston-

ishly, lies probably in the note of irony that pervades everything he has written. This tendency to view everything and everybody a little from above, but with a faint wry smile, as an aged though still human sage may view the doings of a lot of clamorous children, must be held a typical coloring of his style as well as choice of material. Sometimes his irony moves on the surface, as when he says in *Beyond Life* that "many of the most applauded public speakers conserve an appreciable degree of intelligence for private life." More frequently it strikes at the very root of "established" things, as when in the same work he asserts that "all religious precepts, when closely considered, can have no bearing whatever on any future life, and would seem to be purely utilitarian figments of romance, as variously contrived with a view of improving the coherence and comeliness of life here."

Nor does his irony confine its general pervasiveness to the phrase alone. It determines whole situations, often without being openly voiced, as in the story named "A Brown Woman," when the illustrious but physically unfortunate Mr. Pope masters his own desire in order to make a maid happy, and then suddenly learns that his magnanimous self-sacrifice has been the indirect means of luring both the maid and her swain to a premature and cruel death. In either case, however—whether his irony

be merely verbal or built right into the structure of his story—its pretended paradoxes never fail to carry a large burden of truth.

Mr. Cabell never smiles his wry smile merely to show his own superiority. Nor does he ever use his wonderful control of our language for the vulgar purpose of appearing clever. While he would be quick to refute and resent any attempt at ascribing to his art an ethical purpose, it is hard to escape the conclusion that back of all his writing lies a firmly held and carefully reasoned conviction bearing on the essential wrongness of men and things "as they are," or on their essential rightness "as they ought to be."

§ 4

In his long struggle not only for recognition but for a chance to write freely in accordance with his natural bent, Mr. Cabell has had to face numerous vicissitudes. Yet he has never been able to deviate from the chosen path except in vain attempts at complete denial of it. One hears of strange and futile business ventures, and there is an unusually long gap in the sequence of his creative production between 1909 and 1913. Much earlier occurred a brief period of newspaper reporting on the *New York Herald* when he must have been farther removed from his proper element than any other experience ever took him.

Through all difficulties, and through all temptations, of which there must have been some, he stuck to his own purpose with a faith and a persistency that balked at no kind of sacrifice. Glancing through his books with an eye to the life-story back of them, one catches more than one unmistakable glimpse of such sacrifices, and some of these may have been severe enough to leave behind wounds that will never heal. It is in this fact, perhaps, one must seek the explanation of a strange wistfulness that runs through so much of Mr. Cabell's work, coming to the surface unexpectedly even in moments of mischievous playfulness.

Finally a haven was reached, however, and since 1915 there has been no break in the constant stream of his production. His failure to publish anything in 1918 is explained by the appearance in a single year, 1919, of two such volumes as *Beyond Life* and *Jurgen*. It may or may not be significant that these last few years have witnessed Mr. Cabell's decisive turning to the vein of pure fancy which to me embodies his highest and most typical form of expression. Yet the vein of *Jurgen* and *Figures of Earth* is palpably made manifest in the little "Fable of the Foolish Prince," contained in one of his earliest works, *The Cords of Vanity*.

He has now been writing for more than twenty years according to his own statement in *The*

Lineage of Lichfield, where he says that some of the stories included in *The Line of Love* were produced in 1901. But if it be true as reported, that the verse collected in *From the Hidden Way* dates back to his nineteenth year, then the better part of another decade must have been devoted to preparation and experimentation. The likelihood of this is also suggested by the remarkable unity of plan that binds all his imaginative works into a vast harmonious whole, symmetrically arranged and consistent in its minutest details. In the course of time this plan has been perfected and developed through various revisions, but in a somewhat vaguer form it must have been present almost from the start as a determinant of his plots.

Even his first youthful novel, *The Eagle's Shadow*, published in 1904, deals with such familiar Lichfield characters as Felix Kennaston, who later holds the centre of the stage in *The Cream of the Jest*. A typical instance of the unity just mentioned may be sought in the fact that the ten poets around whom are built the equal number of stories in *The Certain Hour* recur in *The Lineage of Lichfield* as the ten figures of clay said to have been fashioned by Dom Manuel in *Figures of Earth* and later vitalized by Queen Freydis. The *Lineage* itself is an afterthought, I suppose, but as such it would have been impossible but for its unformu-

lated presence in the author's mind some fifteen or twenty years ago.

By this time Mr. Cabell's total production bulks quite large, embracing—apart from several minor but far from unimportant items classed as "scholia"—seven novels, four collections of short stories, one volume of verse, and a long æsthetic-philosophic dissertation, *Beyond Life*, which serves both as an introduction to and a summary of the rest of his work. He has also compiled three volumes of authentic genealogy, but with these we are not concerned here.

His novels and stories fall naturally into three groups that may be designated, respectively, as contemporary, historic and mythical. The first group includes four novels, all of them laid in Lichfield—a name that, without much indiscretion, may be translated into Richmond, Va., where Mr. Cabell was born, where he has lived most of his life, and where several generations of his ancestors had their centre of existence if not actual habitation. The second group is made up of four volumes of short stories, but one of these, *Gallantry*, displays such a continuity of cast and action that it may almost be counted a novel. The action of all but a very few of his four "dizains" of stories is placed in France and England between the years 1265 and 1805. A single story, "The Lady of All

Our Dreams" in *The Certain Hour*, takes the reader into our own country during the early nineties. It is, as far as I know, the one short story written by Mr. Cabell around a theme that may be called contemporary.

The mythical works consist of three novels, but one of these, *Domnei*, which was first published in 1913 under the title of *The Soul of Melicent*, combines with two short stories out of *The Line of Love* in forming a semi-historical transition between the legendary doings in the land of Poictesme and the stories set on firm historic ground. By the *Lineage* the time covered by *Figures of Earth*, *Domnei* and *Jurgen* may be calculated with minute accuracy as extending from the year 1234, when Dom Manuel encountered Miramon Lluagor at the pool of Haranton, to the year 1277, when Jurgen made his unexampled and retrospective excursion into sundry known, unknown and otherwise indiscoverable regions. As myth and history are mixed in *Domnei*, so past and present meet in *The Cream of the Jest*, where the central character of Felix Bulmer Kennaston lives his daily life quietly and unobtrusively as becomes a respectable citizen, while at night, when released from the fettering conventions of ordinary life, he roams through recorded and unrecorded human history, not at will indeed, but nevertheless with an exultant sense of

being Horvendile, the demiurgic author within whose mind the supposedly "real" drama of life is plotted and enacted as a mere play of fancy.

§ 5

A survey of this body of work, taking into account not only its scheme of construction but also the material out of which it is built, cannot fail to suggest a comparison with Balzac's *Human Comedy*. The difference in quantity may be left aside at once, as Mr. Cabell is only in his forty-fourth year and already reported at work on a new volume. Nor have I the least intention of sitting in judgment on the respective artistic merits of two writers so different in temperament. As one of them has been dead some seventy and odd years, while the other one is still among us, such a task would be no less perilous than laborious. I am now merely concerned with their similar schemes of producing a vast fictional structure giving through individual portraiture a collective picture of a considerable section of mankind. Seen from this limited viewpoint, I am inclined to think that, even as it stands to-day with many important parts still missing, Mr. Cabell's achievement has the better claim to the ambitious title employed by the accredited father of modern Realism (De Foe and Fielding being classed as grandfathers, I suppose).

The scheme of Balzac, however noble and imposing in its execution, was confined to his own day and country. He tried—and nearly succeeded—to present a complete picture of a modern society, with all its component parts shown as functioning in their proper relationship. The world's literature knows no other panorama of such gigantic proportions, so teeming with life, so crammed with figures rendered familiar by repeated encounters. And yet that panorama is on the whole static and, one might almost say, provincial; while the one produced by Mr. Cabell is above all kinetic and for this very reason more universal. Though made on a smaller scale, it allows us to follow the kaleidoscopic movements not only of men, but of a whole race, and not only during a quickly passing period, but through many ages. It is an epic chronorama, if the coining of a word be pardonable for the purpose of defining what nearly amounts to a new literary category.

Starting from his own day and the immediate surroundings of his own youth, Mr. Cabell has set himself the task of tracing the roots of a social group in all their ramifications through space and time. In the pursuit of this immense task he has produced a series of intensely dramatic and psychologically convincing screen flashes of numerous inter-related human destinies, which, when studied

in their proper order, give us a surprisingly complete line of hereditary development from the days of the troubadours to the eve of *Main Street*. Every scene presented to us is startlingly vivid and minutely accurate. Each one gives a cross section of life at a clearly indicated time and place.

The thread that unites the entire sequence of stories and novels into an organic whole is family history, and it connects unmistakably with Mr. Cabell's genealogical preoccupations. Without any intimation of his to that effect, one might be tempted into concluding that he has traced his own ancestry through the ages and across many countries until the long line is lost in a haze of legend and myth. He says himself, in his dedicatory epistle to the *Lineage*, that the general method used in the stories composing *The Line of Love* and later observed in all his subsequent works, has been "to depict a decisive passage in the lives of two persons, then a similar untying of knots in the life of a child of that couple, and yet afterward in one of the grandchildren's life-history."

But while the dominant figures of all his pictures belong to *The Lineage of Lichfield*, those figures are introduced with a richness of environmental detail that makes us live over again not only such more conspicuous individual lives, but the collective existence of a whole period. And Mr. Cabell

knows a great deal about men and things as they used to be. I dare not lay claim to any vast store of historic information, but I have scraped up enough in the course of long and varied reading to know how hard it must be to rival Mr. Cabell's intimate knowledge of manners, personalities and events in France and England and our own country, not to speak of Poictesme and Noumaria, Coccagne and Leukê, during the seven centuries covered by the lineage of romance tying Robert Etheridge Townsend, Felix Bulmer Kennaston and Colonel Rudolph Musgrave, all of Lichfield, to Manuel the Redeemer and Jurgen the pawnbroker.

In fact, I have found that one of the least safe assumptions to make about Mr. Cabell is that of ignorance—on any one point, or concerning any one subject, however abstruse, or remote, or “practical.” He has read copiously and multifariously, and while much of his reading may have come out of the unusual library inherited by Felix Kennaston, or out of the still more unusual one collected by John Charteris, other parts of it may be traced to quite sober text books and equally reliable newspapers. Every page of his composition proves, too, that mechanical reading, with unquestioning acceptance of data or conclusions, is quite foreign to him. Furthermore, he manifests to an extraordinary degree that precious gift of imaginative asso-

ciation which, back of some slight incidental reference, discovers vast unmapped regions of entrancing possibilities. Lastly we may add that, evidently, his knowledge of men and places cannot spring from books alone, but must be based on a considerable amount of early travelling. So open-eyed were his peregrinations in the lands celebrated by a certain long dead Nicolas de Caen, reputed author of those forgotten romances whence Mr. Cabell pretends to have drawn most of his material, that time and again he is able to recall scenes out of Poictesme with a precision that makes us wonder whether, in our own travels, we may not have happened upon that very spot.

Mr. Cabell puts all his fiction under the head of biography, because, as he explains in the *Lineage*, all his heroes and heroines merely represent the extended lives of Dom Manuel and Jurgen, the two germ characters whose juxtaposition remains fixed through the ages wherever one set of men do things without wasting much thought on cause or reason while another set of men spend their time doing nothing but wondering why this or that thing should be done. Thus the biography produced by Mr. Cabell is not only individual but human, not only personal but universally symbolic. It is mankind itself, with its unvarying double dualism of sex and temperament, that we follow through seven

centuries of loving and losing, of doing and dreaming. And this protracted serial includes not only his own life story, but ours and that of all other human beings, for in the last instance all of us are men or women, doers or dreamers.

§ 6

Though the significance of the figures evoked by Mr. Cabell's art goes far beyond their own individual existence, this is no reason for believing them abstract and anemic puppets, made out of æsthetic or biological theories. Varying degrees of vitality and verisimilitude must necessarily be found in a portrait gallery of such dimensions as that created by Mr. Cabell in his eleven volumes of fiction. As a rule, however, every character included in that gallery lives intensely with a life entirely and unmistakably his or her own. Should a tendency to reiteration be traceable during the long progress down the centuries, this need not prove any lack of versatility in the author, but may depend on the nature of his plan.

"It is," he says in his latest and most explicit elucidation of his own intentions, "as if we were watching an itinerant comedian that with each new generation assumes the garb of a new body and upon a new stage enacts a variant of yesterday's drama." That the identity is discernible beneath

the ever-shifting costume is not to be counted a shortcoming, in Mr. Cabell's opinion, but a proof of success, for we must bear in mind that, regardless of the momentary disguise, the puppet-comedian beneath it remains through the ages Dom Manuel or Jurgen, or maybe a mixture of both—unless the part be female, in which case the removed mask will disclose Niafer or Queen Freydis or Alianora of Provence. This much granted, there are enough of individual divergencies to sate any greed for novelty. And each new incarnation of the ancestral prototype goes about the superficially varying but at bottom unvarying business of life with supreme confidence in the uniqueness of his or her own moment.

This is particularly true of the progeny of Jurgen. And it is notable that, as we draw nearer our own day, the common descendants of Dom Manuel and Jurgen evidence the former's blood and features in diminishing degree, until finally, as we reach contemporary Lichfield, we find the stage crowded with modern variations of the timidly audacious pawnbroker who was ever ready to try any drink once. Yet this predominance of a certain strain in their common descent fails to make the Townsends and Kennastons and Musgraves in any manner monotonous. Nor can any such shortcoming be detected in the women whom they love and lose and remember, or else marry and all but forget.

In view of repeated declarations on the part of Mr. Cabell that "first-class art never reproduces its own surroundings," one cannot help chuckling a little at the zest as well as success with which he has reproduced the exact atmosphere of Lichfield and the exact mingling of vice and virtue in its inhabitants of both sexes. Unbiased people tell me that no more truthful pictures of the new South are to be found anywhere. And placing the large legendary figures of Dom Manuel and Jurgen *hors concours*, his modern portraits seem to me the best in his collection. Any attempt at discounting that attraction on account of community in profession will be met by the retort that Mr. Richard Fentnor Harrowby, heir to Harrowby's Crème Cleopatre and other remunerative toilet articles, proves the disturbing presence of this type in many unexpected walks of life. Nor is Colonel Musgrave, whose later history is so charmingly set forth in *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*, essentially of the writing craft, although he ranks high as a genealogist and is given to introspective musings. In him the bloods of Dom Manuel and Jurgen have become so perfectly blended that we encounter a new type—that of the gentleman who does nothing in the most graceful manner possible and leaves life at that. Like Pater's Pico della Mirandula, we love him for what he is, and not for anything he does or could possibly do.

On the distaff side of Mr. Cabell's gallery the predominance of interest and attraction lies rather at the opposite end of the line. The farther back he leads us, the more brilliant his colors become, and the more ingenious their application. Dame Melicent, who helps to make *Domnei* one of the most quaintly engaging love stories ever written, and Dorothy la Désirée, whom Jurgen loved before he married into the security of pawnbrokerage, and Ettarre, called La Beale, with whom Kennaston-Horvendile adventured nightly, are shapes of infinite grace beyond whose loveliness the mind can only conceive that Helen on whom superhuman charms are bestowed by our own dreams about an unattainable witch-woman. Beside these supremely fair ones, and as no despicable rivals of theirs, we find certain less conspicuous but to me even more fascinating embodiments of the sex, such as the little dryad with whom Jurgen abode so pleasantly in Leukê, or the vampire whose ingenuous prattle helped to make Hell just a little more than bearable to him. Perhaps it is because they dwell nearer the periphery of his story, with no duty of recurring appearances, that he can afford to let his humor play freely with these enticing creatures, while, to make them convincing, his real heroines must be taken with a seriousness that cheats them of their full share of piquancy.

In this respect there is undoubtedly a difference in Mr. Cabell's treatment of the two sexes, for the closer his men stand to the heart of his story, the more complacently he dwells on any little foible that may keep us from taking them over-seriously in the midst of their most heroic situations. Even the marvellous Perion in *Domnei* is not quite spared in this respect, while the Townsends and the Kennastons and the Charterises are treated with a lack of respect that now and then brings them to the borderline of the grotesque. If, nevertheless, these victims of Mr. Cabell's slightly sardonic bent remain heroes to us in a sense, this marks one of the final tests of his art and a proof of the sympathy that always lies at the bottom of it. The superficial violation of this sympathy in the case of his male figures may be explained by his admission that, in spite of life-long study, woman still remains to him so much more of an unsolved mystery than man.

A charge might be made that, in his capacity of portrait painter, Mr. Cabell has confined himself too exclusively to the upper strata of society, thus leaving the total impression of his gallery one-sidedly incomplete. He would probably plead guilty with deceptive readiness, and then add that such was his express purpose. There is nothing for us to do but to take him as he is, and chooses to be, in order to profit by the stores of human insight contained in

his work. If additional compensation be insisted on, it may be sought in Mr. Cabell's Schnitzlerian faculty for exposing the underground entanglements of all social elements, regardless of birth and rank and wealth. This follows naturally from his partiality to love as the "dynamic illusion" that best lends itself to artistic ends, and as a mischievous provoker of situations that remain largely the same on all social levels.

§ 7

A small number of themes run through all of Mr. Cabell's works, serving as strings on which are strung both style and plot. All of them relate intimately to the picture of life's aims and methods which he has set forth minutely in *Beyond Life* and sketched with telling conciseness in the dedicatory epistle of *The Lineage of Lichfield*. While as a rule, these themes are woven into the texture of all his fiction, one of them is apt to dominate each separate work and to furnish the text which that work illustrates.

As far as I know, Mr. Cabell is the only one of our living literary artists in this country who has worked out something like a truly philosophic conception of human existence. With him this conception is developed in a rather whimsical mood, but with the infinite care bestowed on his sentences. It is no priggishly academic system, with hidebound

categories and a pretense at confining the whole living universe within its narrow pigeonholes. Mr. Cabell has simply been pondering the life he observed so closely for artistic purposes with the result that gradually he has come to suspect some sort of inner consistency beneath all the shifting lines and colors of the surface. Out of his continued musings developed in the end a very vague and plastic mind picture, to which he would be the last to apply any such pretentious term as philosophic theory. Yet it furnishes a sort of cosmogonic diagram, and as such it is the more interesting because it rests almost exclusively on æsthetic considerations. It is as if Mr. Cabell had set out to explain to himself the secret laws of his own art, and then suddenly discovered their practical identity with those of life itself.

At the centre of his conception we find the idea of human life as an artistic plot extemporized by an "author," a great "demiurge of romance," whom, in *Jurgen*, in *Figures of Earth*, and above all in *The Cream of the Jest*, we find personified as Horvendile. The double symbolism that merges Horvendile in Kennaston and connects James Branch Cabell with both those interrelated identities, is typically expressive of the manner in which his conception operates. For the principal tool used by the demiurge, the original "author," is art, poetry,

romance, and in the wielding of this tool every human author—and more especially those within whom burns a spark of the fire from Audela, the land of beyond—becomes one of his deputies, pulling at the human puppet strings even as he does.

Nor does he work any more directly than they. With the help of romance, he creates a number of “dynamic illusions,” as of love and honor, patriotism and respectability, beauty and common-sense. Caught and moved by these, man will act as he would not otherwise, departing gradually from the ways of his original nature, until in the end that very nature seems changed. “For man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams,” says Mr. Cabell, and it is by these dreams and the aping of them that he becomes more and more a man.

There is a vast optimism in this truly Cabellian notion, which furnishes an antidote to the slightly wistful pessimism coloring practically everything he has written—an ironically sceptical pessimism that has more than its label in common with the spirit of Anatole France. Its ultimate consequence is the turning of art into one of the main evolutionary factors—which may be held a logical corollary to the current Neo-Lamarckian and Butlerian evolutionism.

The “author,” the demiurge, Horvendile, is life itself, working arbitrarily, but within limits not im-

posed by himself, to bring his puppets to ever-increasing efficiency and comeliness. That is the first object, but the second and more essential one is to establish the "author" as the controller of a universe to which symmetry and beauty are fundamentally foreign. "Kennaston," says Mr. Cabell, "grew to suspect that the existence of mankind upon earth was but an incident in the unending struggle of life to find a home in the universe. . . . For life was not a part of the universe, not a product of the universe at all perhaps, but rather an intruder into the cosmic machinery which moved without any consideration of life's needs."

The picture we get here is stupendous. It has a cosmogonic suggestion, indeed, and a dualistic one that comprises the ubiquitous legend of two contending principles—God and the Devil, light and darkness, mind and matter. Furthermore, it makes man, the supposed puppet, a co-author of the drama as well as an actor in it. In striving for beauty of every kind, man fills both those parts most nearly to the principal "author's" desire, for "the shape-giving principle of all sentient beings is artistic." Even man's attempts at bungling or thwarting the "author's" plots are made to serve a general purpose by producing new situations unimagined by the "author" himself, "so that each generation of naturally inert mortals is propelled toward a higher

sphere and manner of living, by the might of each generation's ignorance and prejudices and follies and stupidities, beneficently directed."

§ 8

Among many strange and captivating shapes born of Mr. Cabell's whimsically acute fancy, that of Horvendile piques me most—perhaps because he comes straight out of Norse mythology, where he is said to have held a place corresponding to that of the Greek Ulysses. At first this mysterious stranger played a very minor part in Mr. Cabell's imaginary world, but every revision and addition has extended the scope and importance of that part. And it is he that takes us naturally into the mythical world of *Jurgen* and *Figures of Earth*—the world of true romance, where, in my opinion, Mr. Cabell has found his most original and most enduring inspirations.

Jurgen is to me a very big, very significant, and very entertaining book. It holds a place in our literature rivalled only by *Figures of Earth*. It is one of those rare books that can be read with equal profit when you want to think and when you want to escape from it. To deny the Rabelaisian strain in it is to belie the scope and depth and courage of its conception. That strain administers to a tendency common to all normal human nature, and it serves one of life's main purposes very effectively,

although perhaps not puritanically enough to satisfy our mentally and emotionally disinfected "leaders of public opinion."

Fault has been found with both *Jurgen* and *Figures of Earth* because their author not only has mixed all accepted and properly classified mythologies but added a few apocryphal ones of his own making. What he has done, in this as in other respects, has no doubt been done quite consciously and probably not without a certain mischievous anticipation of the ensuing shock to learned commentators. More and more he believes the novelist's chief task to be that of diverting, and in these two books he has let his fancy run free with that task as his only apparent guide—to the glorious benefit of every reader who is not temperamentally barred from the enjoyment of anything but gravelled walks and clipped hedges and stuccoed architecture.

Beyond and beside their entertaining qualities these books contain, in spite of Mr. Cabell's occasional protestations to the contrary, many deep and subtle symbolisms, by which, if properly interpreted, we may get still closer to his conception of this globe as "a world of ineffectual inhabitants, each one of whom is a monarch of dreams incarcerated in a prison of flesh." The much advertised adventures of *Jurgen* may be called a humorous epic of intellectual curiosity, and if the hero's investigations

and speculations deal a little too insistently with the dangerous subject of sex, that is, perhaps, because Mr. Cabell, notwithstanding his many strictures on "realism," prefers to deal honestly with life as it is rather than to hide its basic facts behind a chromatic veil of slimy suggestiveness.

And to him all of us are nothing but "figures of earth" until vitalized by a spark of fire from Audela—the land of beyond, where dwells the demiurge of romance. The new life springing from that fire cannot save us from the common lot of holding only what we lose, but under its inspiration we manage to do a little for the production and promotion of various dynamic illusions, by the aid of which, as Felix Kennaston hoped, "living may become well-plotted, coherent, and rational as living is in books." When a man thus inspired steps into his grave, there is something of him left behind by which mankind seems enriched to some degree, and though it means little to himself after Grandfather Death has come with the black horse on which no one rides in more than one direction, his name is remembered, and somehow the awed love clinging to it seems to extend the scope and duration of his life beyond what is granted to ordinary men.

EDWIN BJÖRKMAN.

New York City,
January, 1923.

THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

*"The Eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby,
Knowing that with the shadow of his wing
He can at pleasure still their melody."*

I.

Which Fiddles Before the Curtain

THIS is the comedy of Margaret Hugonin and of the Eagle. With your permission, we will for the present defer consideration of the bird, and devote our attention to Margaret.

I have always esteemed Margaret the obvious, sensible, most appropriate name that can be bestowed upon a girl child, because it is a name which fits a woman—any woman—as neatly as her proper size in gloves.

Yes, the first point I wish to make is that a woman child, once baptised Margaret, is thereby named suitably. Be she grave or gay in after-life, wanton or pious or sullen, comely or otherwise, there will be no possible chance of incongruity: whether she develop a taste for winter gardens or the higher mathematics, whether she take to golf or clinging organdies, the event is provided for. One has only to consider for a moment, and if among a choice of Madge, Marjorie, Meta, Maggie, Margherita, Peggy, and Gretchen, and innumerable others,—if

among all these he cannot find a name that suits her to a T,—why, then, the case is indeed desperate, and he may permissibly fall back upon Madam or, if the cat jump propitiously, and at the appellant's own peril, upon Darling or Sweetheart.

The second proof that this name must be the best of all possible names is that Margaret Hugonin bore it. And so the murder is out. You may suspect what you choose. I warn you in advance that I have no part whatever in her story: and if my admiration for her given name appear somewhat excessive, I can only protest that in this dissentient world every one has a right to his own taste. I knew Margaret. I once admired her not merely in the verb's cool academic sense. And if, in some unguarded moment, I may have carried this admiration to the point of imprudence, her husband most assuredly was long ago regaled with an unsoftened account of my idiocy: and he and I remained, to his last hour, the best of friends. So you perceive that if ever I did so far forget discretion it could scarcely have amounted to a hanging matter.

I am doubly sure that Margaret Hugonin was uncommonly good-looking, for the reason that I could never find a woman under forty-five who shared my opinion. If you clap a Testament into my hand, I cannot affirm that women are eager to

recognise beauty in one another: at the utmost they concede this or that feature is well enough. But when a woman is clean-eyed and straight-limbed, and has youth and a cheery heart, she really cannot help being beautiful, to the judgment of a surprising number of male persons: and when Nature accords her a sufficiency of dimples and an infectious laugh, these same observers are apt to find her irresistible. All these things Margaret Hugonin had. And surely that is enough.

I shall not endeavor, then, to picture for you the attractiveness of Margaret Hugonin in any carefully picked words. She was vain and, as we put it, flighty; she really, I suppose, had very little intelligence; and when in a tantrum her conduct of affairs was quite inexcusable: even so, she stayed, in the vexed reveries of us young fellows of her heyday, a small and shining tyrant whom common-sense might reprimand but must leave undethroned. She kept her cult. For she was Margaret.

And compared to that, mere carnal vanities are trivial things: a gray eye or so is not in the least to the purpose. Yet, since it is the immemorial custom of writer folk to inventory such possessions of their heroines, here you have a catalogue of her personal attractions. Launce's method will serve our turn.

Imprimis, there was not very much of her,—five

feet, at the most: and she was, incommunicably, of the type which we were then used without a blush to indicate as "well-groomed," of the type which implies a locateable great-grandfather or so, and is in every respect the antithesis of that hulking Venus of the Louvre whom people pretend to admire.

Item, Margaret had blue eyes: and when she talked, with her head drooped forward a little, the frank and intent gaze of these eyes was flattering and, in its ultimate effect, perilous, since it led you fatuously to believe that she had forgotten there were any other trousered beings extant. Later, you found this a decided error.

Item, she had a quite incredible amount of yellow hair, which was not in the least like gold or copper or bronze,—here memory spurns the hackneyed similes of metallurgical poets,—but a straightforward yellow, darkening at the roots; and she wore it low on her neck in great coils that were held in place by a multitude of little golden hairpins and divers corpulent tortoise-shell ones.

Item, her nose was a tiny miracle of perfection: and this was noteworthy, for you may observe that Nature, who is an adept at eyes and hair, and a fairly competent mouth maker, very rarely achieves a really fine nose.

Item, she had a mouth: and if you are a Gradgrindian with a taste for painstaking exactness, I

cannot swear it was a particularly small mouth. The lips were rather full than otherwise: one saw in them potentialities of tenderness and generosity and, if you will, of high temper. . . . No, her mouth was not in anything like the pink shoe-button of romance and sugared portraiture: it was manifestly designed less to simper out of a gilt frame or to splutter admirable sentiments over three hundred pages than for gibes and laughter and cheery gossip and honest unromantic eating, as well as for another purpose, which, as a relatively dangerous topic, I refrain here from mentioning.

There you have the best description of Margaret Hugonin that I am capable of giving you. No one perceives its glaring inadequacy more clearly than I do.

Furthermore, I stipulate that if in the progress of our comedy she appear to act with some lack of reason or even of common-sense,—as every woman worth the winning must do once or perhaps twice during her lifetime,—that I be permitted to record the fact, to set it down in all its ugliness, and then to exaggerate it a little, to the end that I may eventually exasperate you and goad you into crying out, “Come, come, you are not treating the girl with common justice!”

For, if such a thing were possible, I would desire you to rival even me in a liking for Margaret

Hugonin. And speaking for myself, I can assure you I came long ago to regard her faults with the same leniency that I accord my own. . . .

Yes, very certainly this bifold indulgence began a great while ago. For the scene of this comedy is laid in the ineffably remote, strange days of Colonel Roosevelt's first presidential term. Looking back, I can remember, but not quite believe in, the queer world we then inhabited: and most droll of all do I find our faith in its stability. For it seemed a fixed and eternally ordered place, a place which was, with minor improvements here and there, to last forever: yet neither Sidon nor Sumeria appears—now—to be more remote than is the America of that day. As for the things we gravely said, and quite honestly meant, one really does not know whether to grin or weep when chance evokes any such artless phantom from that departed and callow and dear time. . . .

But I deviate into the customary jeremiads of the elderly. This, then, is a comedy of that Golden Age which has always been chronologically located about twenty years ago.

RICHARD FENTNOR HARROWBY

Montevideo

14 April 1923

Tribulations of Colonel Hugonin

WE begin on a fine May morning in Colonel Hugonin's rooms at Selwoode, which was, in this remote and fantastic era, the Hugonins' country-place. And there we discover the Colonel dawdling over his breakfast, in an intermediate stage of that careful toilet which enabled him later in the day to pass casual inspection as turning forty-nine.

The old gentleman was discussing the members of his daughter's house-party. We will omit, by your leave, a number of picturesque descriptive passages,—for the Colonel was, on occasion, a man of unfettered speech,—and come hastily to the conclusion, to the summing-up of the whole matter.

“Altogether,” says Colonel Hugonin, “they strike me as being the most ungodly menagerie ever assembled under one roof since Noah landed on Ararat.”

It is a pity to present the Colonel in this particular state of mind, for ordinarily he was as pleasant-

spoken a gentleman as you will be apt to meet on the longest summer day.

You must make allowances for the fact that, on this especial morning, he was still suffering from a recent twinge of the gout, and that his toast was somewhat dryer than he liked it; and, most potent of all, that the foreign mail, just in, had caused him to rebel anew against the proprieties and his daughter's inclinations, which chained him to Selwoode, in the height of the full London season, to preside over a house-party every member of which he cordially disliked. Therefore, the Colonel, having glanced through the names of those at Lady Pevensey's last cotillion, groaned and glared at his daughter, who sat opposite him, and who would herself have been Lady Pevensey if ever his preferences were consulted nowadays; and reviled his daughter's friends with point and fluency, and characterised them as above, for the reason that he was hungered at heart for the shady side of Pall Mall. It was with very English politeness—which patronage begets upon disapproval,—that the Colonel cherished all things American except his daughter, whom he worshipped.

And few youngsters, still retaining the clear vision of their twenties wherewith to view her now preparing the Colonel's second cup of tea, would have denied the Colonel worshipped with impeccable

taste. But Margaret Hugonin, as you have been forewarned, is our heroine; and, as likewise you have already learned, words are very paltry make-shifts when it comes to describing her. Let us simply say, then, that Margaret, his daughter, began to make him a cup of tea, and add that she laughed.

Not unkindly; no, for at bottom she adored her father,—a comely Englishman of some sixty-odd, who had run through his wife's fortune and his own, in the most gallant fashion,—and she accorded his opinions a conscientious, if at times, a sorely taxed, tolerance. For, that very month, Margaret had reached twenty-three, an age of omniscience, when the fallacies and general obtuseness of elderly persons become dishearteningly apparent.

"It's nonsense," pursued the old gentleman, "utter, bedlamite nonsense, filling up Selwoode with writing people! Never heard of such a thing. Gad, I do remember, as a young man, meeting Thackeray at a garden-party at Orleans House,—gentlemanly fellow with a broken nose,—and Browning went about a bit, too, now I think of it. People had 'em one at a time to lend flavor to a dinner—like an olive; we didn't dine on olives, though. You have 'em for breakfast, luncheon, dinner, and everything! I'm sick of olives, I tell you, Margaret!"

Margaret pouted.

"They ain't even good olives. I looked into one of that fellow's books the other day,—that fat chap who was here last spring hanging around Avis just before she caught Blagden. Townsend, wasn't he? Anyhow, it was rot, from start to finish. Sets up to be clever, too: that's the really unendurable part of it. Who wants to be told that impropriety is the spice of life, and that a roving eye gathers remorse? You may call that sort of thing cleverness, if you like: I call it confounded foolishness." And the emphasis with which he said this left no doubt that the Colonel spoke his honest opinion.

"Attractive," said his daughter, patiently, "Mr. Townsend is very, very clever. Mr. Kennaston says that not even the ties of blood relationship can blind him to the fact that literature suffered a considerable loss when Bob Townsend began to write for the magazines."

Thus Margaret spoke. . . . Mellow and suave and of astonishing volume was Margaret's voice; and it came not from the back of her mouth, as do most of our women's voices, but from her chest. It was a queer voice, unforgettable and rather troubling, for its modulations had—somehow—the tonic sadness of distant music; and have been known to thrill impressionable young men to somewhat the same magnanimity and yearning, cloudily

conceived. Yet you could not but smile in spite of yourself at the quaint emphasis fluttering through her speech and pouncing for the most part on the unlikeliest word in the whole sentence. . . .

But the Colonel must have been tone-deaf. "Don't you make phrases for me!" he snorted; "you keep 'em for your menagerie. Think! By gad, the world never thinks. I believe the world deliberately reads the six best-selling books in order to incapacitate itself for thinking." Then, his wrath gathering emphasis as he went on: "The longer I live the plainer I see Shakespeare was right,—what fools these mortals be, and all that. There's that Haggage woman,—speech-making through the country like a hiatused politician. It may be philanthropic, but it ain't ladylike,—no, begad! What has she got to do with Juvenile Courts and child-labor in the South, I'd like to know? Why ain't she at home attending to that crippled boy of hers—poor little beggar!—instead of flaunting through America meddling with other folks' children?"

Miss Hugonin put another lump of sugar into his cup and deigned no reply.

"By gad," cried the Colonel fervently, "if you're so anxious to spend that money of yours in charity, why don't you found a Day Nursery for the Children of Philanthropists,—a place where advanced

men and women can leave their offspring in capable hands when they're busied with Mothers' Meetings and Educational Conferences? It would do a thousand times more good, I can tell you, than that fresh kindergarten scheme of yours for teaching the children of the laboring classes to make a new sort of mud pie."

"You don't understand these things, attractive," Margaret gently pointed out. "You aren't in harmony with the trend of modern thought."

"No, thank God!" said the Colonel, heartily.

Ensued a silence during which he chipped at his egg-shell in an absent-minded fashion.

"That fellow Kennaston said anything to you yet?" he presently queried.

"I don't understand what you are talking about," she protested, unconvincingly. The tea-making, too, engrossed her at this point to an utterly improbable extent.

Thus it shortly befell that the Colonel, still regarding her under intent brows, cleared his throat and made bold to question her generosity in the matter of sugar: five lumps being, as he suggested, a rather unusual allowance for one cup.

Then, "Mr. Kennaston and I are of course," said she, with dignity, "very good friends—"

And having spoiled the first cup in the making, she began on another.

"Glad to hear it," growled the old gentleman. "I hope you prize his friendship sufficiently not to marry him. The man's a fraud,—a flimsy, sickening fraud, like his poetry, begad, and that's made up of botany and wide margins and indecency in about equal proportions. It ain't fit for a woman to read,—in fact, a woman ought not to read anything: a comprehension of the Decalogue and the cookery-book is enough learning for the best of 'em. Your mother never—never—"

Colonel Hugonin paused and stared for a little at the open window. He seemed to be interested in something a great way off.

"We used to read Ouida's books together," he stated. "Lord, Lord, how she revelled in Chandos and Bertie Cecil and those dashing Life Guardsmen! And she used to toss that little head of hers and say I was a finer figure of a man than any of 'em—thirty years ago! And I was then, but I ain't now. I'm only a broken-down, cantankerous old fool," declared the Colonel, blowing his nose violently, "and that's why I'm quarrelling with the dearest, foolishhest daughter man ever had. Ah, my dear, don't mind me,—run your menagerie as you like, and I'll stand it."

Margaret adopted her usual tactics: she perched herself on the arm of his chair, and began to stroke his cheek very gently. She often wondered as to

what dear sort of woman that tender-eyed and pink-cheeked mother of the old miniature had been,—the mother who had died when Margaret was two years old. Margaret loved the idea of her, vague as it was. And, just now, somehow, the notion of two grown people reading Ouida did not impress Miss Hugonin as being especially ridiculous.

“Was she very nice?” asked Margaret, softly.

“My dear,” said her father, “you are the picture of her.”

“You dangerous old man!” said she, laughing and rubbing her cheek against his in a manner that must have been highly agreeable. “Attractive, do you know that is the corkingest little compliment I’ve had for a long time?”

Thereupon the Colonel chuckled. “Do you pay me for my adulation, then,” said he, “by driving the dog-cart over to meet Billy’s train to-day.”

“But I can’t,” said Miss Hugonin, promptly.

“Why?” demanded her father.

“Because—” said Miss Hugonin: and after giving this really excellent reason, reflected for a moment and strengthened it by adding, “Because—”

“See here,” her father questioned, “what did you two quarrel about, anyway?”

“I really don’t remember,” said she; and continued, with hauteur and inconsistency, “I am not

aware that Mr. Woods and I have ever quarrelled."

"By gad, then," said the Colonel, "you may as well prepare to, for I intend to marry you to Billy some day. Dear, dear, child," he interpolated, "have you a fever?—your cheek's like a coal. Billy's a man, I tell you,—worth a dozen of your Kennastons and Townsends. I like Billy. And besides, it's only right he should have Selwoode,—wasn't he brought up to expect it? It ain't right he should lose it simply because he had a quarrel with Frederick, for, by gad,—not to speak unkindly of the dead, my dear,—Frederick quarrelled with every one he ever knew, from the woman who nursed him to the doctor who gave him his last pill. He may have got his genius for money-making from Heaven, but he certainly got his temper from the devil. I really believe," said the Colonel, reflectively, "it was worse than mine. Yes, not a doubt of it,—I'm a lamb in comparison. But he had his way, after all: and even now, poor Billy can't get Selwoode without taking you with it." Here the Colonel caught his daughter's face between his hands, and turned it toward him. "I wonder, now," said he, in meditative wise, "if Billy will consider that a drawback?"

It seemed to his paternal partiality improbable: a number of younger males would have sworn it was unthinkable.

However, "Of course," Margaret began, in a crisp voice, "if you advise Mr. Woods to marry me as a good speculation—"

But her father caught her up, with a whistle. "Eh?" said he. "Love in a cottage?—is it thus the poet turns his lay? That's some more confounded nonsense. I tell you, even in a cottage the plumber's bill has to be paid, and the grocer's little account settled every month. Yes, by gad, and even if you elect to live on bread and cheese and kisses, you'll find Camembert a bit more to your taste than Sweitzer."

"But I don't want to marry anybody, you ridiculous bay rum and mouthwash flavored darling." And Margaret sniffed. "There is soap in it, too, and tweeds, and face powder, and breakfast bacon—"

"Oh, very well," said the Colonel; "don't. Be an old maid, and lecture before the Mothers' Clubs, if you like. I don't care. Anyhow, you meet Billy to-day at twelve-forty-five. You will?—that's a good child. Now run along and tell the menagerie I'll be downstairs as soon as I've finished dressing."

And the Colonel rang for his man and proceeded to complete the final minutiae of toilet. Colonel Hugonin seemed a thought absent-minded this morning.

"I say, Wilkins," he questioned, after a little. "Ever read any of Ouida's books?"

"Ho, yuss, sir," said Wilkins; "Miss Guerrant—Miss Yewgonin's myde Célestine, thet is, sir,—was reading *Hunder Two Flegs* only lawst evening, sir."

"H'm—Wilkins,—if you can run across one of them in the servants' quarters—you might leave it on the table by my bed to-night."

"Yuss, sir; thenk you, sir."

"And—h'm, Wilkins,—you can put it under that Charteris book Miss Margaret gave me Monday. *Under* it, Wilkins,—and, h'm, Wilkins,—you needn't mention it to anybody. Ouida ain't cultured, Wilkins, but she's good reading. I suppose that's why she ain't cultured, Wilkins."

"Very probably, sir: thenk you, sir," said Wilkins. "Though I hev nothing against culture, myself, sir."

"You are lucky," the Colonel estimated. . . .

3.

Wherein We Hark Back

NOW let us go back a little. In a word, let us utilise the next twenty minutes—during which Miss Hugonin drives to the neighboring railway station, in not the most pleasant state of mind conceivable,—by explaining a thought more fully the posture of affairs at Selwoode on the May morning that starts our comedy.

To do this, one must commence with the nature of the man who founded Selwoode.

It was when the nineteenth century was still a hearty octogenarian that Frederick R. Woods caused Selwoode to be builded. I give you the name by which he was known on "the Street." A mythology has grown about the name since, and strange legends of its owner are still narrated where brokers congregate. But with the lambs he sheared, and the bulls he dragged to earth, and the bears he gored to financial death, we have nothing to do: suffice it, that he performed these opera-

tions with almost uniform success and in an unimpeachably respectable manner.

And if, in his time, he added materially to the lists of inmates in various asylums and almshouses, it must be acknowledged that he bore his victims no malice, and that on every Sunday morning he confessed himself to be a miserable sinner, in a voice which was perfectly audible three pews off. At bottom, he considered his relations with Heaven on a purely business basis; he kept a species of running account with Providence; and if on occasions he overdrew it somewhat, he saw no incongruity in evening matters with a cheque for the church fund.

So that at his death it was said of him that he had, in his day, sent more men into bankruptcy and more missionaries into Africa than any other philanthropist in the country.

In his sixty-fifth year, he caught Alfred Van Orden short in Lard, erected a memorial window to his wife and became a country gentleman. He never again set foot in Wall Street. The old romantic had, at the cost of no little research, located and purchased the very tract of land which in the seventeenth century was granted to his ancestor, Lieutenant Gervase Woods. There he builded Selwoode,—a handsome Tudor manor which stands some seven miles from the town of Fair-

haven,—and there he dwelt in state, by turns affable and domineering to the neighboring farmers, and evincing a grave interest in the condition of their crops. He no longer turned to the financial reports in the papers; and the pedigree of the Woodses hung in the living-hall for all men to see, beginning gloriously with Woden, the Scandinavian god, and thence tracing in the male line to a respectable culmination in the names of Frederick R. Woods and of William, his brother.

It is not to be supposed that the squire of Selwoode omitted to supply himself with a coat-of-arms. Frederick R. Woods evinced an almost childlike pride in his heraldic blazonings, which were, to be sure, as these matters go in America, tolerably authentic.

“The Woods arms,” he would inform you, with a relishing gusto, “are vert, an eagle displayed, barry argent and gules. And the crest is out of a ducal coronet, or, a demi-eagle proper. We have no motto, sir,—none of your ancient coats have mottoes.”

The Woods Eagle he gloried in. The bird was perched in every available nook at Selwoode: it was carved in the woodwork, was set in the mosaics, was chased in the tableware, was woven in the napery, was glazed in the china. Turn where you would, an eagle or two confronted you: as

Colonel Rudolph Musgrave once put it, in his neat after-dinner manner, Frederick R. Woods at Selwoode was reminiscent of "a sore-headed bear who had taken up permanent quarters in an aviary."

There was one, however, who found the bear no very untractable monster. This was the son of his dead brother, the child who went about Selwoode as heir presumptive. Frederick R. Woods' wife had died long ago, leaving him childless. His brother's boy was an orphan; and, for a time, he and the cantankerous old man lived together peaceably enough. Indeed, Billy Woods was in those days as fine a lad as you would wish to see, with the eyes of an inquisitive cherub and a big tow-head, which Frederick R. Woods fell into the habit of cuffing heartily, in order to conceal the fact that he would have burned Selwoode to the ground rather than allow any one else to injure a hair of that head.

In the consummation of time, Billy, having attained the ripe age of eighteen, and being then a student at King's College, announced to his uncle that he intended to become a famous painter. Frederick R. Woods exhorted him not to be a fool, and packed him off to a northern university, where such nonsense would be taken out of him, or, in any event, could be ignored avuncularly.

Billy Woods returned on his first vacation with a fragmentary mustache and any quantity of paint-tubes, canvases, palettes, mahl-sticks, and such-like paraphernalia. Frederick R. Woods passed over the mustache, and had the painters' trappings burned by the second footman. Billy promptly purchased another lot. His uncle came upon them one morning, rubbed his chin meditatively for a moment, and grunted: then he tiptoed to his own apartments, lest Billy—the lazy young rascal was still abed in the next room,—should awaken and discover his knowledge of this act of flat rebellion.

It is possible the old gentleman was so completely accustomed to having his own way that this unlooked-for opposition tickled him by its novelty; or perhaps he recognised in Billy an obstinacy akin to his own; or perhaps it was merely that he loved the boy. In any event, he never again alluded to the subject; and it is a fact that when Billy sent for carpenters to convert an upper room into an atelier, Frederick R. Woods spent two weeks in Boston, in order to remain in ignorance of the entire affair.

Billy scrambled through college, somehow, in the allotted four years. At the end of that time, he returned to find new inmates installed at Selwoode.

For the wife of Frederick R. Woods had been before her marriage one of the beautiful Musgrave

twins. Lichfieldians still remembered them,—especially those grizzled, portly, rosy-gilled fellows who prattled, upon provocation, of Reconstruction days, and of the duels wherein the speakers had figured when women were really worth fighting about, and of how happy everybody was, upon the whole, under the heels of “carpet-baggers,” and who rejoiced also to talk of the notable furor created by Margaret and Martha Musgrave when they “came out” in the days of crinoline and the Grecian bend. Martha Musgrave married and, as was narrated with gusto, “laid down the law for” Frederick R. Woods; she really did, incredibly asserted these gossips, dictate in all matters to the uxorious, fond bear: while Margaret Musgrave, so these oldsters would continue, was married to Thomas Hugonin, then a gallant cavalry officer in the service of Her Majesty, the Empress of India.

And she must have been the nicer of the two, because everybody who knew her said that Margaret Hugonin was exactly like her.

So it came about naturally enough, that Billy Woods, now an *Artium Baccalaureus*, if you please, and not a little proud of it, found the Colonel and his daughter, then on a visit to this country, installed at Selwoode as guests and quasi-relatives. And Billy was twenty-two, and Margaret was nineteen.

Precisely what happened I am unable to tell you. Billy Woods asserted it was none of my business; and Margaret said that it was a long, long time ago and she really couldn't remember.

But we can all form a very fair notion of what is most likely to occur when two sensible, normal, healthy young people are thrown together in this intimate fashion at a country-house where the remaining company consists of a pair of elderly gentlemen. Billy was forced to be polite to his uncle's guests: and Margaret could not well be discourteous to her host's nephew. So it befell in the course of time that Frederick R. Woods and the Colonel—who had become a prime favorite, by virtue of his implicit faith in the Eagle and in Woden and Sir Percival de Wode of Hastings, and such-like flights of heraldic fancy, and had augmented his popularity by his really brilliant suggestion of Wynkyn de Worde, the sixteenth-century printer, as a probable collateral relation of the family,—it came to pass, in fine, that the two old fellows nodded over their port and chuckled, and winked at each other and agreed that the thing would do.

This was all very well: but they failed to make allowances for the inevitable quarrel, and the subsequent spectacle of the gentleman contemplating suicide and the lady looking wistfully toward a nunnery. In this case the quarrel arose over Teddy

Musgrave, who for a cousin was undeniably attentive to Margaret: and in the natural course of events, the quarrel would have been made up before the week was out, had not Frederick R. Woods selected this very moment to interfere in the matter.

It is a tragic proverb, that so often misquoted *si vieillesse savait!*

The blundering old man summoned Billy into his study and ordered Billy to marry Margaret Hugonin, precisely as the Colonel in his army days might have ordered a private to go on sentry-duty. A week earlier Billy would have jumped at the chance; a week later he would probably have suggested it himself: but at that exact moment he would have as willingly contemplated matrimony with Atropos or Medusa or any of the Furies. Accordingly, he put aside his uncle's suggestion with the very stiffest sort of politeness. Frederick R. Woods flew into a pyrotechnical display of temper, and offered Billy—as a whipper-snapper, an insolent young puppy, and an ingrate,—the choice between obeying his describer's commands and leaving that house forever,—the choice, in fact, which Frederick R. Woods had been according Billy at very brief intervals ever since the boy fell ill with measles, fifteen years before, and had refused to take the proper medicines.

It was merely the elder's usual manner of expressing a request or a suggestion. But this time, to the old man's horror and amaze, the boy took him at his word and left Selwoode within the hour.

Billy's life, you see, was irrevocably blighted. It mattered very little what became of him; personally, he did not care in the least. But as for that fair, false, fickle woman—perish the thought! Sooner a thousand deaths! No, he would go to Paris and become a painter of world-wide reputation: the money his father had left him would easily suffice for Billy's simple wants. And some day, the observed of all observers in some bright hall of gaiety, he would pass her coldly by, with a cynical smile upon his lips, and she would grow pale and totter and fall into the arms of the bloated Silenus, for whose title she had bartered her purely superficial charms.

Yes, upon mature deliberation, that was precisely what Billy decided to do.

Followed uncomfortable days at Selwoode. Frederick R. Woods told Margaret of what had occurred: and he added the information that, as Margaret was his dead wife's nearest relative, he intended to make Margaret his heir.

Then Margaret informed Frederick R. Woods

precisely what she thought of him. She acquainted him with the fact that he was a sordid, low-minded, grasping beast, and a miser, and a tyrant, and, as elocution swept her onward, an assassin and a snorting old parricide. She notified him that he was thoroughly unworthy to wipe the dust off his nephew's shoes,—an office toward which Frederick R. Woods had never shown any marked aspirations,—and that Billy had acted throughout in a most noble and sensible manner. She stated furthermore that, personally, she wouldn't marry Billy Woods if he were the last man on earth, because she had always despised him; added the information that she expected to die shortly, and voiced the hope they would both be satisfied then; and rounded off her peroration by throwing soft arms about the neck of Frederick R. Woods, and bursting into tears and telling him that he was the dearest old man in the world and that she was thoroughly ashamed of herself.

So they kissed and made it up. And after a little the Colonel and Margaret went away from Selwoode, and Frederick R. Woods was left alone to nourish his anger and indignation, if he could, and to hunger for his boy, whether he would or not. He was too proud to seek the boy; indeed, the old man never thought of that: and so he waited alone in his fine house, sick at heart, impotent, hop-

ing against hope that the boy would come back. The boy never came.

The boy never came, because he was what the old man had made him,—headstrong, and wilful and obstinate. Billy had been thoroughly spoiled. The old man had nurtured his pride, had applauded it as a mark of proper spirit; and now it was this same pride that had robbed Frederick R. Woods of the one thing he really loved in all the world.

So, at last, the weak point in the armor of this sturdy old Pharisee was found, and Fate pierced it gaily. This was retribution, if you will: and it would be highly gratifying to assure you that few of his victims in "the Street," few of the countless widows and orphans that he had made, suffered more bitterly than he in those last days. But the Author of our comedies does not manage matters quite so neatly as that. The old man was unhappy and disappointed: so he fretted, he sulked, and he raged. And his dependants suffered,—he maintained a small army of Presbyterian pensionaries, —and his servants suffered, and the innumerable civic and ecclesiastic and professorial emissaries who came to beg, and as a rule to get, some of his money to aid them in great altruistic causes, these suffered also. . . .

It was almost two years after Billy's departure from Selwoode that a servant, coming to rouse

Frederick R. Woods, on a fine June morning, discovered in the place of the grunting and peering old man a corpse. He had been ailing for some time. It was his heart, the doctors said: and probably, to some degree it was, though not precisely in the sense they meant.

He was found in his night clothes, seated before his great carved desk, on which his head and shoulders had fallen forward: they rested on a sheet of legal-cap paper half-covered with a calculation in his crabbed old hand as to the value of his "up-town" Lichfield real estate,—the calculation which he never finished. Underneath was a mass of miscellaneous papers, among them a will, dated the day after Billy left Selwoode, in which Frederick R. Woods bequeathed his millions unconditionally to Margaret Hugonin when she should come of age.

Her twenty-first birthday had fallen in the preceding month. So Margaret was summoned from Aix to become an exceedingly wealthy woman in her own right: and you may depend upon it, that if many men had loved her before, they worshipped her now,—or, at least, said they did, and, after all, their protestations were the only means she had of judging. She might have been a countess,—and it must be owned that the old Colonel, who had an honest Anglo-Saxon reverence for a title, was not

elated when she refused Lord Pevensey,—and she might have married any number of grammarless gentlemen, personally unknown to her, whose fervent proposals almost every mail brought in. And besides these, there were many others, more orthodox in their wooing, some of whom were honestly in love with Margaret Hugonin, and some who were quite as honestly in love with her money: and she would have none of them.

She refused them all with the utmost civility, as I happen to know. How I learned it is no affair of yours.

For Miss Hugonin had tolerably keen eyes, which she used to advantage. In the world about her they discovered very little that she could admire. She was none the happier for her wealth: the piled-up millions overshadowed her personality: and it was not long before she decided that most persons regarded her simply as the heiress of the Woods fortune,—an unavoidable encumbrance attached to the property, which divers thrifty-minded gentlemen were willing to put up with. This hypothetical being put up with was a plight before which pride arose in a hot blush; and it must be confessed, she sought consolation in the looking-glass.

She must have been an humble-minded young person, as girls average, for in the favored mirror she found no good and sufficient reason for a man's

going mad over Margaret Hugonin. So her mature and final decision was for the future to regard all men as fortune-hunters and to do her hair differently.

She carried out both resolutions. When a gentleman grew pressing in his attentions, she more than suspected his motives: and when she eventually declined to accompany him to the altar it was done with perfect courtesy, but the glow of her eyes was at such times accentuated to a marked degree.

Meanwhile the Eagle brooded undisturbed at Selwoode. Miss Hugonin would allow nothing to be altered.

"The place doesn't belong to me, attractive," she would tell her father. "I belong to the place. Yes, but I do,—I'm exactly like a little cow thrown in with a little farm when they sell it, and all my little suitors think so, and they are very willing to take me on those terms, too. But they shan't, attractive. I hate every single solitary man in the whole wide world excepting you when you are properly shaved, and I particularly hate that horrid old Eagle; but we'll keep him because he's a constant reminder to me that Solomon or Moses, or whoever it was that said all men were liars, was a person of very great intelligence."

So that we may fairly say the money did her no good.

If it benefited no one else, that was not Margaret's fault. She had a high sense of her responsibilities; those weighty offertories which Frederick R. Woods had gruntingly bestowed to further the progress of civilisation and the virtues, Miss Hugonin aggravated and gave affably; and she, at various times, abetted philanthropy and literature and theosophy and art and temperance and education and all other laudable causes. Mr. Kennaston, in his laughing manner, was wont to jest at her varied enterprises and to term her Lady Bountiful; but Felix Kennaston had no real conception of the proper uses of money. In fact, he never thought about money except in connection with matches and umbrellas and such other articles as you naturally borrowed from provident and really reliable persons. He admitted this to Margaret with a whimsical sigh.

Margaret grew very fond of Mr. Kennaston because he was not mercenary.

Mr. Kennaston was much at Selwoode. Many people came there now,—masculine women and muscleless men, for the most part. They had, every one of them, some scheme for bettering the universe; and if among them Margaret seemed somewhat out of place,—a butterfly among earnest-minded ants,—her heart was in every plan they advocated, and they found her purse-strings in-

finitely elastic. The girl was honestly anxious to be of some use in the world.

So at Selwoode they gossiped of great causes and furthered the millennium. And above them the Eagle brooded.

All this time Billy was junketing abroad, where every year he painted masterpieces for the Salon, which—on account of a nefarious conspiracy among the “established” æsthetic dotards of forty and even upwards,—were invariably refused.

Now Billy is back again in Lichfield, and the Colonel has insisted that he come to Selwoode, and Margaret is waiting for him in the dog-cart. The glow of her eyes is very, very bright. Her father’s careless words this morning, coupled with certain speeches of Mr. Kennaston’s last night, have given her food for reflection.

“He wouldn’t dare,” says Margaret, to no one in particular. “Oh, no, he wouldn’t dare after what happened four years ago.”

And, Margaret-like, she has forgotten that what happened four years ago was all caused by her having flirted outrageously with Teddy Musgrave, in order to see what Billy would do.

4.

Irrational Relapse of Mr. Woods

THE twelve-forty-five, for a wonder, was on time: and from it descended a big, blond young man, who did not look in the least like a fortune-hunter.

Miss Hugonin resented this. Manifestly, he looked clean and honest for the deliberate purpose of deceiving her. Very well! She would show him!

He was quite unembarrassed. He shook hands cordially: then he shook hands with the groom, who was grinning in a most unprofessional manner because Master Billy was back again at Selwoode. Subsequently, in his old decisive way, he announced they would walk to the house, as his legs needed stretching.

The insolence of this was breath-bereaving, for it sounded quite as if he had something to say to Margaret in private and could not wait one minute. Beyond doubt, this was a young man who needed

to be taken down a peg or so, and that at once. For of course, she was not going to walk back with him!—a pretty figure they would cut strolling through the fields, like a house-girl and the milkman on a Sunday afternoon! She would simply say she was too tired to walk, and that would end the matter.

So she said she thought the exercise would do them both good.

They came presently with desultory chat to a meadow bravely decked in all the gauds of spring. About them the day was clear, the air bland. Spring had revamped her ageless fripperies of tender leaves and bird-cries and sweet, warm odors for the adornment of this meadow; above it she had set a turkis sky splashed here and there with little clouds that were like whipped cream; and upon it she had scattered largesse, a Danaë's shower of buttercups. Altogether, she had made of it a particularly dangerous meadow for a man and a maid to frequent.

Yet there it was that Mr. Woods paused under a burgeoning maple,—paused resolutely, with the lures of Spring thick about him, compassed with every snare of scent and sound and color that the witch is mistress of.

Margaret hoped he had a pleasant passage over. Her father, thank you, was in the pink of condi-

tion. Oh, yes, she was quite well. She hoped Mr. Woods would not find America—

"Well, Peggy," said Mr. Woods, "then, we will have it out right here."

His insolence was so surprising that, in order to recover herself, Margaret actually sat down under the maple-tree. Peggy, indeed! she deliberated. No person breathing had been impudent enough to call her Peggy, now for four whole years.

"Because I intend to be friends, you know," said Mr. Woods.

And about them the maple-leaves made a little island of sombre green, around which more vivid grasses rippled and dimpled under the fitful spring breezes. And everywhere leaves lisped to one another, and birds shrilled insistently. It was a perilous locality.

The charitable can but suppose Billy Woods to have been out of his head when he suggested the enterprise, so far beyond youth's power, of being friends in such a place. Though, to be sure, you would have thought from the airy confidence with which he spoke that Margaret had come safely to forty year and wore steel rimmed spectacles.

But Miss Hugonin merely cast down her eyes and was aware of no reason why they shouldn't be. She was sure he must be hungry, and she thought luncheon must be ready by now.

In his soul, Mr. Woods observed that her lashes were long,—long beyond credibility. Lacking the numbers that Petrarch flowed in, he did not venture, even to himself, to characterise them further. But it was queer they should be pure gold at the roots: she must have dipped them in the ink-pot. And oh, the strong, sudden, bewildering curve of 'em! He could not at the present moment recall ever noticing quite such lashes anywhere else. No, it was highly improbable that there were such lashes anywhere else. Perhaps a few of the superior angels might have such lashes. And that possibility, once recognised, should induce all persons for the future to attend church more regularly.

Aloud, Mr. Woods observed that, the case being such, they had better shake hands.

It would have been ridiculous to contest the point. The dignified course was to shake hands, since he insisted on it, and then to return at once to Selwoode.

Margaret Hugonin had a pretty hand, and Mr. Woods, as an artist, could not well fail to admire it. Still, he need not have looked at it as though he had never before seen anything quite like it; he need not have neglected to return it; and when Miss Hugonin reclaimed her hand, after a decent interval, he need not have laughed in a manner that compelled her to laugh, too. These things were unnec-

essary and annoying, because they caused Margaret to forget that she despised him.

For the time being, she actually thought he was rather nice.

"I acted like an ass," said Mr. Woods, tragically. "Oh, yes, I did, you know. But if you'll forgive me for having been an ass, I'll forgive you for throwing me over for Theodorick Quentin Musgrave the Fourth; and at the wedding I'll dance through any number of pairs of patent-leathers you choose to mention."

So that (ran Margaret's mental annotation) was the way he looked at it. Teddy Musgrave, indeed! Why, Teddy was a dark little man with brown eyes,—just the sort of man she most objected to. How could anyone ever possibly fancy a brown-eyed man? Then, for no apparent reason, Margaret flushed, and Billy, who had stretched his great length of limb on the grass beside her, noted it with a pair of the bluest eyes in the world, and thought it vastly becoming.

"Billy," said she, impulsively,—and the name having slipped out once by accident, it would have been absurd to call him anything else afterward,— "it was horrid of you to refuse to take any of that money."

"But I didn't want it," he protested. "Good Lord, I'd only have done something foolish with it."

It was awfully square of you, Peggy, to offer to divide, but I didn't want it, you see. I don't want to be a millionaire, and give up the rest of my life to founding libraries and explaining to people that if they never spend any money on amusements they'll have a great deal by the time they're too old to enjoy it. I'd rather paint pictures."

So that Margaret must have endeavored at some period to make him accept part of Frederick R. Woods' money. . . .

"You make me feel—and look—like a thief," she reproved him.

Then Billy laughed a little. "You don't look in the least like one," he reassured her. "You look like an uncommonly honest, straightforward young woman," Mr. Woods added, handsomely, "and I don't believe that under the severest temptation you would purloin anything."

She thanked him for his testimonial, with all three dimples in evidence.

This was unsettling. He hedged.

"—Except, perhaps—" said he.

"Yes?" queried Margaret, after a pause.

However, she questioned him with her head drooped forward, her brows raised; and as this gave him the full effect of her eyes, Mr. Woods became quite certain that there was, at least, one thing of which she might be expected to

rob him, and he wisely declined to mention it.

Margaret did not insist on knowing what it was. Perhaps she heard it thumping under his waistcoat, where it was behaving very queerly.

So they sat in silence for a while. Then Margaret fell a-humming to herself: and the air chanced, by the purest accident, to be—of course—that foolish, senseless old song they used to sing together four years ago.

Billy chuckled. "Let's!" he obscurely pleaded.

Spring prompted her.

"Oh, where have you been, Billy boy?" demanded Margaret's contralto.

"Oh, where have you been, Billy boy, Billy boy?"

Oh, where have you been, charming Billy?"

She sang it in a low, hushed voice, just over her breath. Not looking at him, however. And, oh, what a voice! thought Billy Woods. A voice that was honey and gold and velvet and all which is most sweet and rich and soft in the world. Find me another voice like that, you prime donne! Indeed, I'd like to see you do it.

But he chimed in, nevertheless, with his pleasant if thin baritone, and lilted his own part quite creditably.

"I've been to seek a wife,

She's the joy of my life;

She's a young thing, and cannot leave her mother,"—

only Billy sang it "father," just as they used to do.

And then they sang it through, did Margaret and Billy,—sang of the dimple in her chin and the ringlets in her hair, and of the cherry pies she achieved with such celerity,—sang as they sat in the spring-decked meadow every word of that inane old song that is so utterly senseless and so utterly unforgettable.

It was a quite idiotic performance. One can but set it down to the snares of Spring,—to her insidious, delightful snares of scent and sound and color that—for the moment, at least—had trapped these young people into loving life infinitely.

But one wonders who is responsible for that tatter of rhyme and melody that had come to these young people from nowhere in particular? Mr. Woods, as he sat up at the conclusion of the singing vigorously to applaud, would have shared his last possession, his ultimate crust, with that unknown benefactor of mankind. Indeed, though, the heart of Mr. Woods just now was full of loving kindness and capable of any freakish magnanimity.

For Mr. Woods, who four years ago had thrown over a fortune and exiled himself from his native land, rather than propose marriage to Margaret Hugonin, had no sooner come again into her presence and looked once into her perfectly fathomless eyes than he could no more have left her of his own

accord than a moth can turn his back to a lighted candle. He had fancied himself entirely cured of that boy-and-girl nonsense; his broken heart, after the first few months, had not interfered in the least with a naturally healthy appetite; such other interests as became his age had engrossed him, and there had been at least one baby whose paternity he did not question: yet, behold, here was the old malady raging again in his veins and with renewed fervor.

Probably it was because the girl had a pretty face. Very certainly in the conversation just recorded Margaret had not displayed any great wisdom or learning or tenderness or wit, nor, in fine, any of the qualities a man might naturally look for in a helpmate. Yet at the precise moment he handed his baggage-check to the groom, Mr. Woods had decided to marry her. In an instant he had fallen head over ears in love; or to whittle accuracy to a point, he had discovered that he had never fallen out of love; and if you had offered him an empress or fetched Helen of Troy from the grave for his delectation he would have laughed you to scorn.

In his defence, it can but be pleaded that Margaret was an unusually nice-looking girl. It is all very well to flourish a death's head at the feast, and bid my lady go paint herself an inch thick, for to this favor she must come: and it is quite true

that the reddest lips in the universe may give vent to slander and lies, and the brightest eyes be set in the dullest head, and the most roseate of complexions be purchased at the corner drug-store: but, say what you will, a pretty woman is a pretty woman, and as long as she continues so, no plausible amount of common-sense or experience will prevent a man, on provocation, from alluring and coaxing and even entreating her to make a fool of him. We like it. And they, so far as goes the available evidence, must like it, too.

So Mr. Woods lost his heart on a fine spring morning, and was unreasonably elated over the fact.

And Margaret was content enough.

5.

Reflections Before Mirrors

THEY talked for a matter of a half-hour in the fashion aforetime recorded,—not wise nor witty talk, but very pleasant to make. There were many pauses. There was much laughter over nothing in particular. There were any number of ambitiously begun sentences that ended nowhere. Altogether, it was just the sort of talk for a man and a maid.

Yet some twenty minutes later, Mr. Woods, preparing for luncheon in the privacy of his chamber, gave a sudden exclamation. Then he sat down, and rumbled his hair thoroughly.

“Good Lord!” he groaned; “I’d forgotten all about that infernal money. Oh, you ass!—you abject ass! Why, she’s one of the richest women in America, and you’re only a fifth-rate painter with a paltry thousand or so a year! You marry her!—why, I daresay she’s refused a hundred better men than you! She’d think you were mad. Why, she’d think you were after her money. She

—oh, she'd only think you a precious cheeky ass, she would, and she'd be quite right. You *are* an ass, Mr. William Vartrey Woods! You ought to be locked up in some nice quiet stable, where your heehawing wouldn't disturb people. You need a keeper, you do!"

He sat for some ten minutes, meditative. Afterward he rose and threw back his shoulders and drew a deep breath.

"No, we aren't an ass," he addressed his reflection in the mirror, as he carefully knotted his tie. "We're only a poor chuckle-headed moth who's been looking at a star a bit too long. It's a bright star, Billy, but it isn't for you. The girl would never have you, never in the world; and there is no sense getting into this thing deep enough to make yourself unhappy. You remember how that confounded Helen Smithers upset you all last winter. So we are going to be sensible now, by way of a change. We're going to get a telegram to-morrow that will call us away from Selwoode. We aren't coming back any more, either. We're simply going to continue painting fifth-rate pictures, and hoping that some day she'll find the right man and be very, very happy."

Nevertheless, he decided that a blue tie would look better, and was exceedingly particular in arranging it.

At the same moment Margaret stood before her mirror and tidied her hair for luncheon and assured her image in the glass that she was a weak-minded fool. She pointed out to herself the undeniable fact that Billy, having formerly refused to marry her—oh, ignominy!—seemed pleasant-spoken enough, now that she had become an heiress. His refusal to accept part of her fortune was a very flimsy device. He hoped to get all of it. Oh, he did, did he!

Margaret powdered her nose viciously.

For there was at least one person who saw through him. Billy's frank bearing this unhoodwinkable observer plainly perceived to be the result of consummate hypocrisy. In his laughter her keen ear detected a hollow ring; and his courteous manner she found, at bottom, mere servility. And finally she demonstrated—to her own satisfaction, at least,—that his charm of manner was of exactly the same sort that had been possessed by many other eminently distinguished criminals.

How did she do this? My dear sir, you had best inquire of your mother or your sister or your wife, or any other lady that your fancy dictates. They know about these mental processes; and they call it feminine intuition.

And after it all,—

"Oh, dear, dear!" said Margaret; "I do wish he didn't have such nice eyes!"

6.

The Menagerie Is Fed

ON the way to luncheon Mr. Woods came upon Adèle Haggage and Hugh Van Orden, both of whom he knew, very much engrossed in each other, in a nook under the stairway. To Billy it seemed just now quite proper that every one should be in love: for was it not—after all,—the most pleasant condition in the world? So he greeted them with a semi-paternal smile that caused Adèle to flush a little.

She was—let us say, interested,—in Mr. Van Orden. That was tolerably well known. In fact, Margaret—prompted by Mrs. Haggage, it must be confessed,—had invited him to Selwoode for the especial purpose of entertaining Miss Adèle Haggage. An alliance with Van Orden & Sons—particularly when you reflected upon Hugh's being all the sons, and upon the feeble condition of his delightful old father,—was an excellent match: and Mrs. Haggage, as an experienced chaperon, knew the value of country houses. To her upsetment,

however, the boy had developed a disconcerting tendency to fall in love with Margaret, who snubbed him promptly and unmercifully. He had accordingly fallen back on Adèle, and Mrs. Haggage had regained both her trust in Providence and her temper.

In the breakfast-room, where luncheon was laid out, the Colonel greeted Mr. Woods with the enthusiasm a sailor shipwrecked on a desert island might conceivably display toward the boat-crew come to rescue him. The Colonel liked Billy: and, furthermore, the poor Colonel's position at Selwoode just now was not utterly unlike that of the supposititious mariner; were one minded to venture into metaphor, the Colonel might be described as clinging desperately to the rock of old fogeyism and surrounded by weltering seas of advanced thought. Colonel Hugonin himself was not advanced in his ideas. Also, he had forceful opinions as to the ultimate destination of those who were.

Then Billy was presented to the men of the party,—Mr. Felix Kennaston and Mr. Petheridge Jukesbury. Mrs. Haggage he knew slightly: and Kathleen Saumarez he had known very well indeed, some six years previously, before she had ever heard of Miguel Saumarez, and when Billy was still an undergraduate. She was a widow now, and not well-to-do: and Mr. Woods' first thought on

seeing her was that a man was a fool to write verses, and that she looked like just the sort of woman to preserve them.

His second reflection was that he had verged on imbecility when he fancied he admired that slender and dark-haired type. A woman's hair ought to be a coronal of sunlight; a woman ought to have very large, candid eyes of a color between that of sapphires and the tint of the spring heavens, only infinitely more beautiful than either; and all petticoated persons differing from this description were manifestly quite unworthy of any serious consideration.

So his eyes turned to Margaret, who had no eyes for him. She had forgotten his existence, with an utterness that verged on ostentation; and if it had been any one else Billy would have surmised she was in a temper. But to imagine that angel in a temper was nonsense. And, oh, what eyes she had! and what lashes! and what hair!—and altogether, how adorable she was, and what a wonder the admiring gods had not snatched her up to Olympus long ago!

Thus far Mr. Woods.

But if Miss Hugonin was somewhat taciturn, her counsellors in divers schemes for benefiting the universe were in opulent vein. Billy attended silently.

"I have spent the entire morning by the lake," Mr. Kennaston informed the party at large, "in company with a mocking-bird who was practising a new aria. It was a wonderful place: the trees were lisping verses to themselves, the sky was trying to match the eyes of our hostess, and a faint wind was making tucks and ruches and pleats all over the water, quite as if the breezes had set up in business as mantua-makers. I fancy they thought they were working on a great sheet of blue silk, for it was very like that. And every once in a while a fish would leap, and leave a circle of bubble and foam that you would have sworn was an inserted lace medallion."

Felix Kennaston was then known as the author of *The King's Quest* and two other emaciated volumes of verse. He was at this time a full-bodied young man, upon the saner side of thirty, with longish hair of no particular shade: and if his green eyes were a trifle aged, his manner was pertinaciously youthful.

"Indeed," Mr. Petheridge Jukesbury observed, "it is very true that God made the country and man made the town. A little more claret, please."

Mr. Jukesbury was even then a prominent worker in the cause of philanthropy and temperance. He was ponderous and bland: for the rest, he was president of the Society for the Suppression

of Nicotine and the Nude, vice-president of the Anti-Inebriation League, and secretary of the Society for the Eradication of the Erotic.

"I am never really happy in the country," Mrs. Saumarez dissented; "it reminds me so constantly of our rural drama. I am always afraid the quartette may come on and sing something."

Kathleen Eppes Saumarez was then more or less well-known as a lecturer before women's clubs, and as the author of many sympathetic stories of Nature and animal life of the kind that at this time were in vogue. There was always an indefinable air of pathos about her; as Rudolph Musgrave put it, one felt, somehow, that her mother had been of a domineering disposition, and that Kathleen took after her father.

"Ah, dear lady," Mr. Kennaston cried, playfully, "you, like many of us, have become an alien to Nature in your quest of the Earthly Paradox. Epigrams are all very well, but I fancy that one impulse from a vernal wood can teach you more of Pan than a whole problem-play of smart sayings. So few of us are natural," Mr. Kennaston complained, with a dulcet sigh; "we are too sophisticated to put confidence in any of our acquaintances, especially ourselves. Why should we not fearlessly trust all to Nature,—to the great mother, who is, I grant you, in her angry moods, the

necessity of various useful inventions, but who, in her kindly moments—" He paused, with a wry face. "I beg your pardon," said he, "but I believe I have caught rheumatism lying by that confounded pond."

Mrs. Saumarez rallied the poet, with a pale smile. "That comes of communing with Nature," she reminded him: "and it serves you rightly, for natural communications corrupt good epigrams. I prefer Nature with wide margins and uncut leaves," she spoke, in her best platform manner. "Art should be an expurgated edition of Nature, with all the unpleasant parts left out. And I am sure," Mrs. Saumarez added, handsomely, and clinching her argument, "that Mr. Kennaston gives us much finer sunsets in his poems than I have ever seen in the west."

He acknowledged this with a bow.

"Not sherry,—claret, if you please," said Mr. Jukesbury. "Art should be an expurgated edition of Nature," he repeated, with a suave chuckle. "Do you know, I consider that admirably put, Mrs. Saumarez,—admirably, upon my word. Ah, if our latter-day writers would only take that saying to heart! We do not need to be told of the vice and corruption prevalent, I am sorry to say, among the very best people; what we really need is continu-

ally to be reminded of the fact that pure hearts and homes and happy faces are to be found to-day alike in the palatial residences of the wealthy and in the humbler abodes of those less abundantly favored by fortune, and yet dwelling together in harmony and Christian resignation and—er—comparatively moderate circumstances.”

At that Mrs. Saumarez harked back to citing from another of her lectures. “Surely,” Mrs. Saumarez protested, “art has nothing to do with morality. Art is a process. You see a thing in a certain way; you make your reader see it in the same way—or try to. If you succeed, the result is art. If you fail, it may be the book of the year.”

“Enduring immortality and the patronage of the reading public,” Mr. Jukesbury placidly insisted, “will be awarded, in the end, only to those who dwell upon the true, the beautiful, and the—er—respectable. Art must cheer; it must be optimistic and edifying and—ah—suitable for young persons; it must have an uplift, a leaven of righteousness, a—er—a sort of moral baking-powder. It must utterly eschew the—ah—unsmiling aspects of life as un-American. As I recall reading somewhere, in my unluckily remote boyhood, this world exists solely for the benefit and for the improvement of all the decent individuals in it. Art, therefore, is,

if I may so express myself, not at home in the *menage à trois* or—er—the representation of the nude. Yes, another glass of claret, if you please.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mrs. Haggage, in her deep voice. Sarah Ellen Haggage was, at this especial time, the President General of the Society for Sexless Suffrage, the third Vice-Regent of the Daughters of All American Wars, and a Director of the Ladies League for the Edification of the Impecunious. “—And I am glad to see,” Mrs. Haggage went on, “that the literature of the day is so largely beginning to chronicle the sayings and doings of the laboring classes. The virtues of the humble must be admitted in spite of their dissolute and unhygienic tendencies. Yes,” Mrs. Haggage added, meditatively, “our literature is undoubtedly acquiring a more elevated tone: at last we are shaking off the scintillant and unwholesome influence of the French.”

“Ah, the French!” sighed Mr. Kennaston: “a people who think depravity the soul of wit! Their art is mere artfulness. Now, they care nothing whatever for Nature.”

“No,” Mrs. Haggage assented; “they prefer nastiness. All French books are immoral. I ran across one the other day that was simply hideously indecent,—unfit for a modest woman to read. And I can assure you that none of its author’s other

books are any better. I purchased the entire set at once and read them carefully, in order to make sure that I was justified in warning my working-girls' classes against them. I wish to misjudge no man,—not even a member of a nation notoriously devoted to absinthe and illicit relations.”

She breathed heavily, and looked at Mr. Woods as if reflecting upon what he too must have been up to when in Paris. Then she gave the name of the book to Petheridge Jukesbury. He meant to have its suppression attended to at once by the Society for the Eradication of the Erotic, he said. And Mrs. Haggage forewarned him to get by all means the illustrated edition.

“Dear, dear,” sighed Felix Kennaston, as Mr. Jukesbury made a note of the doomed volume’s title and publisher: “you are all so practical. You perceive an evil and proceed at once, in your common-sense way, to crush it, to stamp it out. Now, I can merely lament certain unfortunate tendencies of the age; I am quite unable to contend against them. Do you know,” Mr. Kennaston continued gaily, as he trifled with a bunch of grapes, “I feel horribly out-of-place among you? Here is Mrs. Saumarez creating an epidemic of useful and improving knowledge throughout the country by means of her charming lectures. Here is Mrs. Haggage, the mainspring, if I may say so, of any number of

educational and philanthropic alarm clocks which will some day rouse from lethargy the sleeping public—”

“Once women have the ballot,” Mrs. Haggage began, “the moral influence alone—”

“Quite so,” said Felix Kennaston, hastily. “And here also is my friend Jukesbury, whose eloquent pleas for a higher life have turned so many workmen from gin and improvidence, and in a printed form are disseminated even in such remote regions as Africa, where I am told they have produced the most satisfactory results upon the simple-hearted, but anthropophagous inhabitants. And here, above all, is Miss Hugonin, utilizing the vast power of money,—which, I am credibly informed, is a very good thing to have, though I cannot pretend to speak from experience,—and casting whole bakeryfuls of bread upon the waters of philanthropy. And here am I, the idle singer of an empty day,—a mere drone in this hive of philanthropic bees! Dear, dear!” said Mr. Kennaston, enviously, “what a thing it is to be practical!”

And he laughed toward Margaret, in his whimsical way.

Miss Hugonin had been unwontedly silent: but she returned Mr. Kennaston’s smile, and began to take part in the conversation.

“You’re only an ignorant child,” she rebuked

him, "and a very naughty child, too, to make fun of us in this fashion."

"Yes," Mr. Kennaston assented, "I am wilfully ignorant. The world adores ignorance; and where ignorance is kissed it is folly to be wise. To-morrow I shall read you a chapter from my *Defence of Ignorance*, which my confiding publisher is going to bring out in the autumn."

So the table-talk went on, and now Margaret bore a part therein.

However, we need not record the symposium in its entirety.

Mr. Woods listened in a sort of a daze. Adèle Haggage and Hugh Van Orden were conversing in low tones at one end of the table; the Colonel was eating his luncheon, silently and with a certain air of resignation; so Billy Woods was left alone to attend and marvel.

The ideas these people advanced seemed to him, for the most part, sensible. What puzzled him was the uniform gravity which they accorded equally—as it appeared to him,—to the discussion of the most pompous platitudes and of the most arrant nonsense. Even Kennaston was now talking almost seriously: and the general tone of infallibility, Billy thought, could be warranted only by a vast fund of inexperience.

But, in the main, they advocated theories he had always held,—excellent theories, he considered. And he was seized with an unreasonable desire to repudiate every one of them.

For it seemed to him that every one of them was aimed at Margaret's approval. It did not matter to whom a remark was ostensibly addressed,—always at its conclusion the speaker glanced more or less openly toward Miss Hugonin. She was the audience to which they zealously played, thought Billy: and he wondered.

Owing to the smallness of the house-party, luncheon was served in the breakfast-room. The dining-room at Selwoode was rarely used, because Margaret declared its size made a meal there equivalent to eating out-of-doors.

And indeed the breakfast-room was far cosier. The room, in the first place, was of reasonable dimensions: it was hung with Flemish tapestries from designs by Van Eyck representing the Four Seasons, but the walls and ceiling were panelled in oak, and over the mantel, carved in bas-relief, was displayed the inevitable Eagle.

The mantel stood behind Margaret's chair: and over her yellow head, half-protectingly, half-threateningly, with his wings outstretched to the uttermost, the Eagle brooded as he had once brooded

over Frederick R. Woods. The old man sat contentedly beneath that symbol of what he had achieved in life. He had started (as the phrase runs) from nothing; he had made himself a power. To him, the Eagle meant the crude, incalculable power of wealth that Frederick R. Woods had gloried in. To Billy Woods, the Eagle meant identically the same thing; and he began to suspect that the Eagle was really the audience to which Miss Hugonin's co-operators in improving the world so zealously played.

Perhaps the misanthropy of Mr. Woods was not wholly unconnected with the fact that Margaret never once looked in his direction. She was too deeply engrossed in the process describable as showing him.

So her eyes never strayed toward Billy: and her attention never left him. At the end of luncheon she could have enumerated every dish of which he had eaten, every glare he had directed toward Kennaston, every beseeching look he had turned to her. Of course, he had taken sherry,—dry sherry. Hadn't he told her four years ago—it was the first day she had ever worn the white organdie dotted with purple sprigs, and was the afternoon they sat by the lake so late that Frederick R. Woods finally sent for them to come to dinner,—hadn't he told her then that only women and children cared for

sweet wines? Of course he had,—the underhanded, scheming, mercenary reprobate!

Billy, too, endured emotions. To hear that paragon, that queen among women, descant of work done in the slums and of the mysteries of sweatshops; to hear her state off-hand that there were seventeen hundred and fifty thousand children between the ages of ten and fifteen years employed in the mines and factories of the United States; to hear her discourse of foreign missions as glibly as though she had been born and nurtured in Zambesi Land: all these things filled him with an odd sense of alienation. He was not worthy of her, and that was a fact. He was only a dumb idiot, and the fine words that came pelting thick and fast from the philanthropic lips about him might as well have been hailstones, for all the benefit he was deriving from them. He could not understand half of what Peggy was talking about.

In consequence, he very cordially detested the people who could,—especially that grimacing ass, Kennaston.

Altogether, neither Mr. Woods nor Miss Hugonin got much comfort from their luncheon.

7.

Treats of Fish and Frippery

AFTER luncheon, Billy had a quiet half-hour with the Colonel in the smoking-room.

Said Billy, between puffs of a cigar, "Peggy's changed a bit."

The Colonel grunted. There are emotions it is wiser not to voice explicitly.

"—Seems to have made some new friends—"

To which the Colonel's answer was a grunt of superior vigor.

"Cultured lot, they seem," said Mr. Woods. "Anxious to do good in the world, too,—philanthropic set, eh?"

This time, the answer was a snort.

"Eh?" said Mr. Woods.

The Colonel looked about him. "My boy," said he, "you thank your stars you didn't get that money; and, depend upon it, there never yet was a gold-ship that wasn't followed."

"Pirates?" Billy Woods suggested, helpfully.

"Pirates are human beings," said Colonel Hugonin, with dignity. "Sharks, my boy; sharks!"

That was all very well: but thereafter Colonel Hugonin proceeded to monopolize Billy's entire afternoon, by "showing him over the place."

Billy gave the Colonel credit for good intentions, and wondered which of the old drives it might be Margaret was taking with that Kennaston fellow.

And that evening, after proper deliberation, "Célestine," Miss Hugonin commanded, "get out that little yellow dress with the little red bandanna handkerchiefs on it; and for heaven's sake, stop pulling my hair out by the roots, unless you want a raving maniac on your hands, Célestine!"

Whereby she had landed her historian in a quandary. For how, pray, is it possible for a simple-minded male fittingly to depict for you the clothes of Margaret?—the innumerable vanities, the quaint devices, the pleasing conceits, with which she delighted to enhance her comeliness? The thing is not to be done. Let us keep discreetly out of her wardrobe.

Otherwise, it would be necessary to prattle of an infinity of mysteries,—of her scarfs, feathers, laces, gloves, girdles, knots, hats, shoes, fans, and slippers,—of her embroideries, rings, pins, pendants,

ribbons, spangles, bracelets, and chains,—and, in fine, there would be no end to the listing of gew-gaws which went to make Miss Hugonin even more arresting to the eye than Nature had fashioned her. For, when you come to think, it takes the craft and skill and life-work of a thousand men to dress one girl, as Felix Kennaston once pointed out: and in Margaret's case, he added, each one of them, could he have beheld the result of their united labors, would have so gloried in his own part therein that there would have been no putting up with any of the lot.

So one omits to speak of the tiny shoes she affected,—patent leather shoes, as memory replevins them, with a seam running irrationally down the exact middle of each foot from the buckle to the toe-tip; the string of fat pearls she almost always wore about her throat; the white frock, say, with arabesques of blue all over it, which Felix Kennaston said reminded him of Ruskin's tombstone; or that other white-and-blue one—*decolleté*, that was,—which, he asserted, seraphic mantua-makers had woven out of mists and the skies of June. Of these fallals, then, one omits to speak, inasmuch as nobody is equally a boot-maker and a lapidary and a milliner and, in fine, an adept in all the other arts and trades and sciences that have now for some while combined to reward a young woman's fore-

thought in selecting monetarily responsible parents.

Nevertheless, if an untutored masculine description will content you,—

Margaret was reported, on reliable feminine authority, to be one of the very few blondes whose complexions can carry off reds and yellows. This particular gown was of a dim, dull yellow,—flounciful (if one may coin a word), diaphanous, and expansive. It fluffed and stood out generally, in the quaint style of a day when everybody, including dressmakers, conspired to conceal the fact that a woman is partially bipartite: and scattered about this gown, in illogical locations, were diamond-shaped red things which, one is credibly informed, were called medallions. The general effect upon young men may be briefly characterised as grateful to the eye and dangerous to the heart, and to any rational train of thought quite fatal.

For this dress was cut low in the neck; and Margaret's neck and shoulders—for the last time, to quote Mr. Kennaston,—would have drawn madrigals from a bench of bishops.

And in consequence, Billy Woods ate absolutely no dinner that evening.

Which the Moon Foments

IT was an hour or two later when the moon, drifting up tardily in the south, found Miss Hugonin and Mr. Kennaston chatting amicably together in the court at Selwoode. They were discussing that masterwork of philosophy and uplift, *The Simple Life*, which was at this time being discussed by all really serious thinkers.

The court at Selwoode lies in the angle of the building, the ground plan of which is L-shaped. The two outer sides of the court are formed by covered cloisters leading to the palm-garden; and by moonlight—when the night is bland and sweet with the odor of growing things, vocal with plashing fountains, spangled with fire-flies that flicker indolently among a glimmering concourse of nymphs and fauns eternally postured in flight or in pursuit,—when the spring moon is about its wizardry, then, the court at Selwoode is perhaps as satisfactory a spot for a tête-à-tête as this transitory world affords.

Mr. Kennaston was in vein to-night; he scintillated; he was also a little nervous. This was probably caused by Margaret's resting one elbow upon the back of the stone bench on which they sat. Her chin propped by her hand, she was now gazing at him in that peculiar, intent fashion of hers which caused young fellows fatuously to believe she had forgotten there were any other trousered beings extant.

Mr. Kennaston, however, stuck to apt phrases and nice distinctions. The moon found it edifying, but rather dull.

After a while Mr. Kennaston desisted from his encomia of naturalness and simplicity; and he and Margaret sat in silence. The lisping of the fountain was very audible. In the heavens, the moon climbed a little further and registered a manifestly impossible hour upon the sun-dial. It also brightened.

It was a companionable sort of moon. It invited talk of a confidential nature.

"Bless my soul," it was signaling to any number of young gentlemen at that moment; "there is only you and I and the girl here. Speak out, man! She can be coaxed into it now, if ever. You will never get a chance like this again, I can tell you. Come, now, my dear boy, I am shining full in your face, and you have no idea how becoming it is. I

am not like that garish, blundering sun, who does not know any better than to let her see how red and fidgety you get when you are excited: I am an old hand at such matters. I have presided over these little affairs since Babylon was a paltry village. I never tell tales out of school. And if anything very intimate begins, I can always go behind a cloud, you know. So speak out!—and act, too, young fellow, if you have the heart of a mouse!”

Thus far the conscienceless spring moon.

Mr. Kennaston sighed. The moon took this as a promising sign and brightened over it perceptibly, and thereby afforded him an excellent gambit.

“Yes?” said Margaret. “What is it that troubles you, beautiful?”

The poet laughed a little. “Adorable child, forgive me if I have of a sudden turned humdrum, mum and grum. But I can really think of no appropriate remark just now, except the customary otototoi! Because, to be frank, I am sulking as irrationally as a baby who clamors for the moon yonder.”

“You aren’t actually anything but a baby, you know.” Indeed, Margaret almost thought of Kennaston as such. She found him so delightfully naïf.

He bent toward her. A faint tremor woke in his speech. “And so,” said he, “I cry for the

moon,—the unattainable, exquisite moon. That is very ridiculous, is it not?"

"Oh, I really can't say," Margaret declared, in haste. "She was kind to Endymion, you know. We will hope for the best. I think we'd better go into the house now."

"You bid me hope?" said he.

"Beautiful, if you really want the moon, I don't see the least objection to your continuing to hope. They make so many little airships and things nowadays, you know, and you'll probably find it green cheese, after all. What is green cheese, I wonder?—it sounds horribly indigestible and unattractive, doesn't it?" Miss Hugonin babbled in a tumult of grief and disappointment. He was about to spoil their friendship: men were so inconsiderate. "I am a little cold," said she, mendaciously. "I really must go in."

He detained her. "Surely," he breathed, "you must know what I have so long wanted to tell you—"

"I haven't the least idea," she protested, promptly. "You can tell me all about it in the morning. I have some accounts to cast up to-night. Besides, I'm not a good person to tell secrets to. You had much better not tell me. Oh, really, Mr. Kennaston, you'd much better not tell me!"

“Ah, Margaret, Margaret,” he pleaded, “I am not adamant. I am only a man, with a man’s heart that cries for you and starves. For I love you, most cruel of children, with a poet’s love that is alien to these sordid days, with a love that is all worship. I love you as Leander loved his Hero, as Pyramus loved Thisbe. Ah, child, dear child, how beautiful you are! You are fairest of created women, and infinitely lovelier, I suspect, than any of those fabulous queens for whose smiles old cities burned and kingdoms were so lightly lost. I am mad for love of you! Ah, have pity upon me, Margaret, for I love you very tenderly!”

He delivered these observations with appropriate fervor.

“Mr. Kennaston,” said she, “I am sorry. We got along so nicely before, and I was so proud of your friendship. We’ve had such good times together, you and I, and I’ve liked your verses so, and I’ve liked you— Oh, please, please, let’s keep on being just friends!”

“Friends!” he cried, and gave a bitter laugh. “I have not ever been your friend. Through every moment shared with you, even when I read to you with the most high decorum my verses—those pallid ineffectual verses that praised you timorously under varied names,—even then pulsed in my veins

the riotous pæan of love, the great mad song of love that shamed my paltry rhymes. No, I cannot ever be friends with you, my lady. I must have all or nothing. And you must bid me hope or else bid me go out of your life forever."

Miss Hugonin meditated for a moment, and issued neither mandate.

"Beautiful," she presently queried, "would you be very, very much shocked if I descended to slang?"

"I think," he stated, "that I could endure your argotic cadence without blushing."

"Why, then, cut it out, beautiful! Cut out every single syllable of the love-chatter. I don't believe a word you've said, in the first place; and, anyhow, it annoys me to have you talk like that. I don't like it; and it simply makes me awfully, awfully tired."

Kennaston groaned.

"It shall be as you will," he assured her, with a little quaver in his speech that was decidedly moving. "And in any event, I am not sorry that I have loved you. You have been in my life a power for good. You have gladdened me with the vision of a beauty that is more than human, you have heartened me for this petty business of living, you have praised my verses, you have even accorded me such requisite pecuniary assistance as ensured their publication in a handsome form— You know, I think

they did you, though, about that extra charge for the gilt tops, however little the money meant to you— Ah, but,” cried Felix Kennaston, with a lift of speech, “impractical child that I am, I had not thought of your appalling wealth. My love had caused me to forget the great barrier that stands between us.”

He gasped and took a short turn about the court.

“Pardon me, Miss Hugonin,” he entreated, when his emotions were under firmer control, “for having spoken as I did. I really had forgotten. Think of me, if you will, as no better than the others,—think of me as a mere fortune-hunter. My presumption will be justly punished.”

“Oh, no, no, it isn’t that,” she cried; “it isn’t that, is it? You—you would care just as much about me if I were poor, wouldn’t you, beautiful? Not that I want you to care for me, of course,” Margaret added, with haste. “I want to go on being friends. Oh, that money, that nasty money!” she cried, in a sudden gust of petulance. “It makes me so distrustful, and I can’t help it!”

He smiled at her, wistfully. “My dear,” said he, “are there no mirrors at Selwoode to remove your doubts?”

“I— Yes, I do believe in you,” she said, at length,—“almost. But I don’t want to marry you. You see, I am not really in love with you.” And

Margaret added punctiliously, as was then the pleasant rule of the game: "I never dreamed of such a thing. And I certainly hope that nothing I have said or done can have led you to believe that I even for a moment considered such a thing."

Ensued a silence. Mr. Kennaston bowed his head.

"You bid me, then," said he, "go out of your life forever?"

"Why, beautiful, but how you jump at things! I would probably weep several oceans—"

At that of course he indicated a movement toward her.

"No, you needn't attempt to take any liberties with me," Miss Hugonin announced decisively, "because if you do, I'll never speak to you again. No, you must let me go now—not out of anybody's life, to-night at any rate, but just into the house. You"—for an instant she sought the formula, and found it,—“you must let me think.”

Then Felix Kennaston acted wisely. He rose and stood aside, with a little bow.

"I can wait, child," he said, sadly. "I have already waited a long time."

Miss Hugonin without delay escaped into the house. It was very flattering, of course; he had spoken quite beautifully, she thought, and nobly and

poetically and considerately, and altogether there was absolutely no excuse for her being flustered and irritated. Still, she was.

The moon, however, considered the affair as arranged.

For she had been no whit more resolute in her refusal than becomes any self-respecting maid. In fact, she had not refused him; and the experienced moon had seen the hopes of many a wooer thrive,—chameleon-like, both in variability and in their unneed for solid nourishment,—upon answers far less encouraging than that which Margaret had given Felix Kennaston.

Margaret was very fond of him. All women like a man who can talk the proper sort of nonsense and do the picturesque thing without bothering to consider whether or not he be making himself ridiculous; and more than once in thinking of Kennaston Margaret had wondered if—perhaps—possibly—some day—? And always these vague flights of fancy had ended at this precise point,—incinerated by the sudden flaming of her cheeks.

So Felix Kennaston had his hour. . . . And thereafter Margaret went into Selwoode, quite unconscious that she was humming under her breath the words of a certain inane old song:

"Oh, she sat for me a chair;
She has ringlets in her hair;
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother,"—

only Margaret sang it "father." And thereafter,
too, she frowned and stamped her foot.

"I hate both of them!" she declared.

Amours of Mr. Jukesbury

IN the living-hall of Selwoode Miss Hugonin paused. It had been convenient, under the assault of Mr. Kennaston's wooing, to remember she had the accounts of the Ladies' League for the Edification of the Impecunious to put in order; indeed, her monthly report as treasurer was due in a few days, and Margaret was in such matters a careful and painstaking body, rarely dependent on her secretary: but she was quite too much out of temper to dabble in mathematics now.

It was really all Mr. Kennaston's fault, she assured a pricking conscience, as she went out on the terrace before Selwoode. He had bothered her quite dreadfully and most inconsiderately.

Upon the terrace she found Petheridge Jukesbury smoking in the effulgence of the moonlight; and the rotund, pasty countenance he turned toward her was not unlike the moon's counterfeit in muddy water. Now there is no denying it, these were unregenerate days, and the vice-president of the Anti-

Inebriation League had dined injudiciously. You are not to stretch the phrase: he was merely prepared to accord the universe his approval, to pat Destiny upon the head; and his thoughts ran clear enough, but with Aprilian counter-changes of the jovial and the lachrymose.

"Ah, Miss Hugonin," he greeted her, "I am indeed fortunate. You find me deep in meditation, and also, I am sorry to say, in the practise of a most pernicious habit. You do not object? Ah, that is so like you. You are always kind, Miss Hugonin. Your kindness, which falls, if I may so express myself, as the gentle rain from Heaven upon all deserving charitable institutions, and daily comforts the destitute with good advice and consoles the sorrowing with blankets, would now induce you to tolerate an odor which, I am sure, is personally distasteful."

"But *really* I don't mind," was Margaret's protest.

"I cannot permit it," Mr. Jukesbury insisted, and waved a pudgy hand in the moonlight. "No, really, I cannot permit it. We will throw it away, if you please, and say no more about it," and his glance followed the glowing flight of his cigar-end somewhat wistfully. "Your father's cigars are such as it is seldom my privilege to encounter; but, then, my personal habits are not luxurious, nor my pri-

vate income precisely what my childish imaginings had pictured it at this comparatively advanced period of life. Ah, youth, youth!—as the poet admirably says, Miss Hugonin, the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, but its visions of existence are rose-tinged and free from care, and its conception of the responsibilities of manhood—such as taxes and jury-duty and dentists, even if just to look you over every six months,—I may safely characterise as extremely sketchy. But, pray be seated, Miss Hugonin.”

Common courtesy forced her to comply. So Margaret sat down on the little red rustic bench. In the moonlight—but you have been previously informed how Margaret looked in the moonlight: and over her small head the Eagle, sculptured above the doorway, stretched his wings to the uttermost, half-protectingly, half-threateningly, and appeared to view Mr. Jukesbury with a certain air of expectancy.

“A beautiful evening,” Petheridge Jukesbury suggested, after mature cogitation.

She conceded this was undeniable.

“Where Nature smiles, and only the conduct of man is vile and altogether what it ought not to be,” he continued, with relish. “How true that is, and how consoling! It is a good thing to meditate upon our own vileness, Miss Hugonin,—to reflect

that we are but worms with naturally the most vicious inclinations. It is most salutary—”

“But, Mr. Jukesbury—”

“—Even I am only a worm, Miss Hugonin, though the press has been pleased to speak most kindly of me. Even you—ah, no!” cried Mr. Jukesbury, kissing his finger-tips, with gallantry; “let us say a worm who has burst its cocoon and become a butterfly,—a butterfly with a charming face and a most charitable disposition and considerable property!”

Margaret thanked him with a smile, and began to think wistfully of the Ladies’ League accounts. Still, he was noted in philanthropic fields, and for his labors in behalf of the then forlorn cause of Prohibition: and she endeavored to persuade herself that she considered his goodness to atone for his flabbiness and his fleshiness and his interminable verbosity.

Mr. Jukesbury sighed.

“A naughty world,” said he, with pathos,—“a very naughty world, which really does not deserve the honor of including you in its census reports. Yet I dare say it has the effrontery to put you down in the tax-lists; it even puts me down,—me, an humble worker in the vineyard, with both hands set to the plough—”

“Of course, though, Mr. Jukesbury—”

“—And if I don’t pay up I get the most uncivil letters from the sheriff. Our tax-collectors really do, Miss Hugonin, evince incredible industry in imagining evil about their fellow creatures. Every spring I assure those people that I possess no carry-logs or fykes or bowie knives or telegraph poles, but always the next year they want to know how many of these articles I have secreted somewhere. Such are the low-minded masters of our modern world, of a very naughty world indeed—”

“Still, Mr. Jukesbury—”

“—And I dare say,” Mr. Jukesbury observed, upraising rather uncertain eyes, “that such conduct, as the poet says, creates considerable distress among the angels. I don’t know. I am not acquainted with many angels. My wife was an angel, but she is now a lifeless form. She has been for five years. I erected a tomb to her at inconvenient personal expense, but I did not begrudge it,—no, I did not begrudge a penny of it, Miss Hugonin. She was very hard to live with. But she was an angel, and angels are rare. Miss Hugonin,” said Petheridge Jukesbury, with the mere sketch of a hiccough, “you are an angel.”

“Oh, dear, dear!” said Margaret, to herself; “now he is beginning, and I wish I had gone to bed directly after dinner!”

“Surely,” said Mr. Jukesbury, as was the pleasant

rule of the game, "you must know what I have so long wanted to tell you—"

"No," said Margaret, "and I don't want to know, please. You make me awfully tired, and I don't care for you in the least. Now, you let go my hand,—let go at once!"

He detained her. "You are an angel," he insisted,—“an angel with a large property. I love you, Margaret! Be mine!—become my blushing bride! Your property is far too large for an angel to look after. You need a man of affairs. I am a man of affairs. I am forty-five, and have no bad habits. My press-notices are, as a rule, favorable, my eloquence is accounted considerable, and my dearest aspiration is that you may comfort my declining years. I might add that I adore you, but I think I mentioned that before. Margaret, will you be my blushing bride?"

"No!" said Miss Hugonin emphatically. "No, you tipsy old beast,—no!"

There was a rustle of skirts. The door slammed, and a noted philanthropist was left alone on the terrace.

10.

Mr. Van Orden Makes It Monotonous

IN the living-hall Margaret came upon Hugh Van Orden, who was searching in one of the alcoves for a piece of music that Adèle Haggage wanted and had misplaced.

The boy greeted Margaret as if from depths of misery.

"Miss Hugonin," he lamented, "you're awfully hard on me—"

"I am sorry," said Margaret, "that you have to complain of my treatment of a guest in my own house." Margaret was well on toward a real "temper" now.

"It isn't that, exactly," he protested. "But I never see you alone. And I've had something to tell you—"

"Yes?" said she, coldly.

He drew near to her. "Surely," he breathed, "you must know what I have so long wanted to tell you—"

"Yes, I should think I did!" said Margaret, "and

if you dare bleat out another syllable of it, I'll never speak to you again. This thing is getting monotonous. Good-night, Mr. Van Orden."

Half way up the stairs she paused and ran lightly back.

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" she said, contritely, "I was unpardonably rude. I'm sorry, dear, but it's quite impossible. You are a dear, cute little boy, and I love you wildly,—but not that way. So let's shake hands, Hugh, and be friends! And then you can go and play with Adèle."

He raised her hand to his lips. He really was a nice boy.

"But, oh, dear!" said Margaret, when he had gone; "what horrid creatures men are, and what a temper I'm in, and what a vexatious place the world is! I wish I were a pauper! I wish I had never been born! And I wish—and I wish I had those League papers fixed! I'll do it to-night! I'm sure I need something tranquillising, like assessments and decimal places and unpaid dues, to keep me from screaming. I hate them all—all three of them—as badly as I do him!"

Thereupon she blushed, for no apparent reason, and went to her own rooms in a frame of mind that was inexcusable, but becoming. Her cheeks burned, her eyes flashed with a brighter glow that

was gem-like and a little cruel, and her chin tilted up defiantly. Margaret had a resolute chin, a masculine chin. It must have been only at the last moment that Nature found her chin a thought too boyish and modified it with a dimple,—a very creditable dimple, which Nature may well have been proud of. For that brief, curving dint saved and feminised matters remarkably.

Altogether, then, Margaret swept down upon the papers of the Ladies' League for the Edification of the Impecunious with much the look of a diminutive valkyrie en route for the battle-field.

Subsequently, "Oh, dear, *dear!*" said she, amid a feverish rustling of papers; "the whole world is out of sorts to-night! I never did know how much seven times eight is, and I hate everybody, and I've left that list of unpaid dues in Uncle Fred's room, and I've got to go after it, and I don't want to! Bother those little suitors of mine!"

Miss Hugonin rose, and went out from her own rooms, carrying a bunch of keys, across the hallway to the room in which Frederick R. Woods had died. It was his study, you may remember. It had rarely been used since his death, but Margaret kept her less important papers there,—the overflow, the flotsam of her vast philanthropic and educational correspondence.

And there she found Billy Woods.

II.

Fusillades from the Gold-Ship

WHEN she entered, his back was turned to the door. He was staring at a picture beside the mantel,—a portrait of Frederick R. Woods,—and Billy's eyes when he wheeled about were wistful.

Then, on a sudden, they lighted up as if they had caught fire from her eyes, and adoration flaunted crimson banners in his cheeks, and his heart was a large blaze of happiness. For he loved her: when she entered a room it really made a difference to this impressionable young man. He saw a great many lights, for instance, and heard music. And accordingly, he laughed now in a very contented fashion.

"I wasn't burglarising," said he,—"that is, not exactly. I ought to have asked permission, I suppose, before coming here, but I couldn't find you, and—and it seemed rather important. You see," Mr. Woods continued, pointing to the great carved desk, "I happened to speak of this desk to the Colo-

nel to-night. We—we were talking of Uncle Fred's death; and I found out, quite by accident, that it hadn't been searched since then,—that is, not thoroughly. There are secret drawers, you see; one here,"—he touched the spring that threw it open,—“and the other on this side. There is—there is nothing of importance in them; only receipted bills and such. The other drawer is inside that centre compartment, which is locked. The Colonel wouldn't come. He said for me to trot along, and that he had a book he wanted to read. So he sent me after what he called my mare's nest. It isn't, you see,—no, not quite, not quite,” Mr. Woods murmured, with an odd smile. Then he laughed and added, lamely, “I—I suppose I'm the only person who knew about it.”

Mr. Woods' manner was a thought strange. He stammered in speaking; he laughed unnecessarily; and Margaret could see that his hands fidgeted. Taking him all in all, you would have sworn he was repressing vigorous emotions. But he did not seem exactly unhappy. He was with Margaret.

“Oh, you beauty!” ran his meditating.

He had some excuse. In the soft, rosy twilight of the room—the study at Selwoode was panelled in very dark oak, and the doors and windows were screened with crimson hangings,—her parti-colored red-and-yellow gown might have been a scrap of

afterglow left over from an unusually fine sunset. Her eyes shone like blue stars, and her hair shone,—there must be pounds of it, Billy thought,—and her very shoulders, plump, flawless, ineffable, shone with the glow of an errant cloud-tatter that is just past the track of dawn, and is therefore neither pink nor white, but manages somehow to combine the best points of both colors. In a word, Miss Hugonin was a most quaint and colorful and delectable figure as she came a little farther into the room.

“Ah, indeed?” said Miss Hugonin. And her tone imparted to this remark a surprising degree of chilliness.

“No,” she went on, formally, “this is not a private room: you owe me no apology for being here. Instead, I am rather obliged to you, Mr. Woods, for none of us knew of these secret drawers. Here is the key to the central compartment, if you will be kind enough to point out the other one. Dear, dear!” Margaret concluded, languidly, “all this is quite like a third-rate melodrama. I haven’t the least doubt you will discover a will in there in your favor, and be reinstated as the long-lost heir and all that sort of thing. How tiresome that will be for me, though.”

She was in a mood to be cruel. She held out the keys to him, in a disinterested fashion, and

dropped them into his outstretched palm, just as she might have given a coin to an unusually grimy mendicant. But the tips of her fingers grazed his hand.

That did the mischief. Her least touch was enough.

"Peggy!" he said, as the keys jangled to the floor. Then Mr. Woods drew a little nearer to her and said, "Peggy, Peggy!" in a voice that trembled curiously; and he seemed to have no intention of saying anything further.

Indeed, words could not but appear irrelevant tautology to any one who could see his eyes. Margaret looked into them for a minute; and her own eyes fell. Subsequently she recalled the fact that he was a fortune-hunter, and that she despised him, and also observed—to her surprise and indignation,—that he was holding her hand and had apparently been doing so for some while. You may believe it, that she withdrew that pink-and-white trifle angrily.

"Pray don't be absurd, Mr. Woods," said she.

Billy caught up the word. "Absurd!" he echoed,—"yes, that describes what I've been pretty well, doesn't it, Peggy? *I was absurd when I let you send me to the right-about four years ago. I realised that to-day the moment I saw you. I should have held on like the very grimmest death; I should

have bullied you into marrying me, out of hand, and in spite of fifty Musgraves. Oh, yes, I know that now. But I was only a boy then, Peggy, and so I let a boy's pride come between us. I know now there isn't any question of pride where you are concerned,—not any question of pride nor of any silly misunderstandings, nor of any uncle's wishes, nor of anything but just you, Peggy. It's just you that I care about now."

Margaret replied with a swift intake of the breath that was almost a sob. He had dared, after all: the man was shameless. And yet (she thought dimly), how dear that little quiver in his voice would have been were it unplanned: and how she could have delighted in this big and eager boy were he not the hypocrite she knew him.

Well, she would show him. But somehow—though it was manifestly what he deserved,—she found she could not look him in the face while she showed him.

So she dropped her glance and waited for a moment of tense silence. Then, "Am I to consider this a proposal of marriage, Mr. Woods?" she asked.

Billy stared. "Yes," he answered quietly, after an interval.

"You see," she explained, "you phrased it so vaguely I couldn't quite be certain. You don't pro-

pose very well, Mr. Woods. I've had opportunities to become an authority on such matters, you see, since I've been rich. That makes a difference, doesn't it? A great many men are willing to marry me now who wouldn't have thought of such a thing, say—say, four years ago. So I've had some experience. In fact, no less than three other persons have offered to marry me on account of my money, earlier in this very evening,—before you did, Mr. Woods. And, really, I can't compliment you on your methods, Mr. Woods; they are a little vague, a little abrupt, and a little too transparent, as yet."

"Peggy!" he said. "Why, Peggy—!"

"Dear me," she airily observed, "I'm sure I've said nothing out of the way. I think it speaks very well for you that you're so fond of your old home, and so anxious to regain it at any cost. It's quite touching, Mr. Woods."

She raised her eyes toward his. Women consider it a point of etiquette to smile when they stab: Margaret smiled with an innocence that would have seemed overdone in an angel.

Then she had the grace to be ashamed of herself. Billy's face had turned white. His mouth was set, mask-like, and his breathing was a little perfunctory. It stung her, though, that he was not angry. He was sorry for somebody.

"I see," he said. "You think I want Uncle Fred's money. Yes,—I see."

"And why not?" she queried, pleasantly. "Dear me, but money is a very sensible thing to want, I am sure. It makes a great difference, you know."

He looked down into her face. One might have sworn it was she whom this detected fortune-hunter was pitying.

"Yes," he assented, "it makes a difference,—not a difference for the better, I am afraid, Peggy."

Then Margaret tossed her head. She was losing composure. She would have given virtually anything not to have said quite what she had said; and accordingly she resolved to brazen it out.

"You needn't look at me as if I were a convicted criminal," she stated. "I won't marry you, and there's an end of it."

"It isn't that I'm thinking of," said Mr. Woods, with a grave smile. "You see, it takes me a little time to realise your honest opinion of me. I believe I understand now. You think me a very hopeless cad,—that's about your real opinion, isn't it, Peggy? I didn't know that, you see. I thought you knew me better than that. You did once, Peggy,—once, a long time ago,—and I hoped you hadn't quite forgotten that time."

"I have not forgotten that time." Margaret to all appearance addressed his shirt-studs. "That is

why you can hurt me even now, even more than ever—”

Then Margaret raised cool, mildly puzzled eyes, and spoke without emotion. “To think that I loved you! That is what hurts. For I loved you very dearly, Billy Woods,—yes, I think I loved you quite as much as any girl can ever love any man. You were the first, you see, and girls—girls are foolish about such things. I thought you were brave, and strong, and clean, and honest, and beautiful, and dear,—oh, quite the best and dearest man in the world I thought you, Billy Woods! That was droll, wasn’t it? Yes, it was very droll. You didn’t think of me in quite that way, did you? No; you thought I was well enough to amuse you for a while. I was well enough for a summer flirtation, wasn’t I, Billy? But marriage—ah, no, you never thought of anything so serious as marriage then. You ran away when Uncle Fred suggested your marrying me. You refused pointblank,—refused in this very room,—didn’t you, Billy? That hurt. Yes, it—hurt.”

Billy Woods raised a protesting hand, as if he were about to speak; but afterward he drew a deep and rather tremulous breath, and bit his lip, and he stayed silent.

She had spoken quietly, simply, like one puzzled: now her voice lifted. “But you have hurt me more

to-night,—to-night, when you've come cringing back to me,—to me, whom you'd have none of when I was poor. I'm rich now, though. That makes a difference, doesn't it, Billy? You're willing to whistle back the girl's love you flung away once—yes, you are more than willing. But can't you understand how much it must hurt me to think I ever loved you?"

She wanted him to understand. She wanted him to be ashamed. She wanted him, anyhow, to have the grace to express in words contrition and an appropriate amount of remorse. Nobody need pry over-closely into the reality of it. . . .

But instead, he stood silent, bending puzzled brows toward her.

"Can't you understand, Billy?" she pleaded, softly. "I can't help seeing what a cur you are. I must hate you, Billy,—of course, I must," she insisted, still very gently, as though arguing the matter with herself; then her voice rose. "Oh, but I can't, I can't, Billy! I can't hate you, even though I do know you for what you are!"

His arms lifted a little; and in a flash Margaret knew that what she most wanted in all the world was to have them close about her, so that she could lay her head upon his shoulder and cry contentedly. Oh, she did want to forgive him. If he had lost all sense of shame, why could he not lie to her?

Surely, he could at least lie. And how gladly she would believe!—only the most outrageous, the very flimsiest fiction, her eyes craved of him.

But he merely said, "I see,—I see," and then smiled. "We will put the money aside just now," he said. "Perhaps, after a little, we will come back to that. I think you have forgotten, though, that, when Uncle Fred and I had our difference, you had just thrown me over,—had just ordered me never to speak to you again. I couldn't very well ask you to marry me, could I, in those circumstances?"

"I spoke in a moment of irritation," was pointed out by a peculiarly dignified Margaret. "You would have paid no attention to it whatever if you had really—cared."

Billy laughed, rather sadly. "Oh, I cared right enough," he said. "I still care. The question is, do you?"

"No," said Margaret, with decision, "I don't,—not in the least."

"Peggy," Mr. Woods commanded, "look at me!"

"You have had your answer, I think," Miss Hugonin observed.

Billy caught her chin in his hand and turned her face to his. "And I think, dear, it isn't the real you who has spoken. Hasn't that real you now quite another answer to give me?"

And Margaret looked at his honest-seeming eyes and, in a panic, knew that her traitor lips were forming a "yes," and that she had bitten them only just in time.

"That would be rather light-minded, wouldn't it?" she asked, with a smile. "You see, it was hardly an hour ago I promised to marry Felix Kennaston."

"Kennaston!" Billy gasped. "You—you don't mean that you care for *him*, Peggy?"

"I really can't see why it should concern you," said Margaret, sweetly, "but since you ask—I do. You couldn't expect me to remain inconsolable forever, you know."

Then the room blurred before her eyes. She waited, rigid and defiant. She was aware that Billy was speaking, speaking from a great distance, it seemed; but after a century or two his face came back to her out of the whirl of things. And, though she did not know it, they were smiling bravely at each other.

"—And so," Mr. Woods was stating, "I've been an even greater ass than usual, and I hope you'll be very, very happy."

"Thank you," she returned, mechanically. "I hope so."

After an interval, "Good-night, Peggy," said Mr. Woods.

"Oh—? Good-night," said she, with a start.

He turned to go. Then, "By Jove!" said he, grimly, "I have been so busy making an idiot of myself that I had forgotten all about more important matters."

Mr. Woods picked up the keys and, going to the desk, unlocked the centre compartment with a jerk. Afterward he gave a sharp exclamation. He had found in the secret drawer at the back a paper which appeared to startle him.

Billy unfolded it, slowly, and with a puzzled look in his countenance. Then for a moment Margaret's yellow head stayed virtually on his shoulder, while they read as much of the paper as they could understand. And in the most melodramatic and improbable fashion, they found this to be the last will and testament of Frederick R. Woods, although in respect to its contents the paper seemed to fall short of any proper tradition of romance.

"But I don't understand," was Miss Hugonin's awed comment. "It is exactly like the other will, only— Why, it's dated the seventeenth of June, the day before he died! And it's witnessed by Hodges and Burton,—the butler and the first footman, you know,—and they've never said anything about such a paper. And, then, why should he have made another will just like the first?"

Billy pondered.

By and by, "I think I can explain that," he said, in a rather peculiar voice. "You see, Hodges and Burton witnessed all his papers, half the time without knowing what they were about. They would hardly have thought of this particular one— And it isn't quite the same will as the other: it leaves you practically everything, but it doesn't appoint any trustees, as the other did, because this will was drawn up after you were of age. Moreover, it contains these four bequests to colleges, to establish a Woods chair of ethnology, which the other will didn't provide for."

"Oh, yes, I see. And I remember now, the presidents came after me with beards and spectacles and what he had said to them and everything—"

"Of course, it would have been simple merely to add a codicil to the first will, but Uncle Fred was always very methodical. I—I think he was probably going through the desk the night he died, destroying various papers. He must have taken the other will out to destroy it just—just before he died. He got up in the night, you see, to destroy—some paper that troubled him. And he was quite alone in the night, that spent old man, who had loved me. I was at Boulant's that night—" Billy paused, and then laughed, unmirthfully. "It scarcely matters," said he. "Here is the will,—a rather disappointing document that doesn't live up

to the right traditions of romance, because it does not really change matters at all. Still, it is undoubtedly genuine and undoubtedly the last he made. You will have to have it probated, Peggy, and settle with the colleges. It won't make much of a hole in the Woods millions."

There was in his voice a half-humorous bitterness which Margaret noted. So (she thought) he had hoped for a moment that at the last Frederick R. Woods had relented toward him. It grieved her, in a dull fashion, to see Billy so mercenary. It grieved her—however emphatically she would have denied it,—to see him disappointed. Since he wanted the money so much, she would have liked for him to have it.

"Thank you," she said, freezingly, and took the paper; "I will give it to my father. He will do what is necessary. Good-night, Mr. Woods."

Then she locked up the desk in a businesslike fashion and turned to him, and held out her hand.

"Good-night, Billy," said this inconsistent young woman. "For a moment I thought Uncle Fred had altered his will in your favor. I almost wish he had."

Billy smiled a little.

"That would never have done," he said, gravely, as he shook hands: "you forget what a sordid, and

heartless, and generally good-for-nothing chap I am. It is much better as it is."

Only the most outrageous, the very flimsiest fiction, her eyes craved of him. Even now, at the eleventh hour, lie to me, Billy Woods, and, oh, how gladly I will believe. . . .

But he merely said, "Good-night, Peggy," and went out of the room. His broad shoulders had a pathetic droop, a listlessness.

Margaret was glad. Of course she was glad. At last, she had told him exactly what she thought of him. Why shouldn't she be glad? She was delighted.

By way of expressing this delight, she sat down at the desk, and began to cry.

Another Conflict of Wills

HAVING duly considered the emptiness of existence, the unworthiness of men, and the dreary future which awaited her,—although this need not much trouble anybody who so confidently expected to die very soon,—Miss Hugonin decided to retire for the night. She arose, filled with speculations as to the paltriness of life and the probability of her eyes being red in the morning.

“It will be entirely his fault if they are,” she consoled herself. “Doubtless, he’ll be very much pleased. After robbing me of all faith in humanity, I dare say, the one thing needed to complete his happiness is to make me look like a fright. I hate him! After making me miserable, now, I suppose, he’ll go off and make some other woman miserable. Oh, of course, he’ll make love to the first woman he meets who has any money. And I’m sure she’s welcome to him. I only pity any woman who has to put up with him. No, I don’t,” Mar-

garet decided, after reflection: "I hate her, too."

Miss Hugonin went to the door leading to the hallway and paused. Then she shook her fist.

"I detest you!" she commented, between her teeth; "oh, but how dare you make me feel so ashamed of the way I've treated you!"

The inaudible query was addressed to Mr. Woods. He was standing by the fireplace in the hallway, and his tall figure was sharply outlined against the flame of the gas-logs that burned there. His shoulders had a pathetic droop, a listlessness.

Billy was reading by the firelight a paper of some kind, and over it the black outline of his face smiled grimly. Then he laughed and threw the paper into the fire.

"Billy!" a voice observed,—a voice that to his finding was honey and gold and velvet and all which is most sweet and rich and soft in the world.

Mr. Woods was aware of a light step, a swishing, sibilant, delightful rustling, and of a hint of violets, of a mere reminiscence of orris, all of which came toward him through the dimness of the hall. He started, noticeably.

"Billy," Miss Hugonin stated, "I'm sorry for what I said to you. I'm not sure it isn't true, you know, but I'm sorry I said it."

"Bless your heart!" said Billy: "don't you worry over that. That's all right. Incidentally, the

things you have said to me and about me aren't true, but we won't discuss my criminal tendencies just now. I fancy we are both feeling a bit fagged. So go to bed, Peggy! We will both go to bed, and the night will bring counsel, and we will sleep off all unkindliness. Go to bed, little sister!—get all the beauty-sleep you are not the least in need of, and dream about how happy you are going to be with the man you love. And in the morning I may have something to say to you. Good-night, dear.”

And this time he really went. And when he had come to the bend in the stairs, his eyes turned back to hers, slowly and irresistibly drawn toward her eyes, as it seemed, just as the sunflower is drawn toward the sun, or the needle toward the pole, or, in fine, as the eyes of young gentlemen of twenty-six are ordinarily drawn toward the eyes of the one woman in the world during her incumbency of this position. Then he disappeared.

The mummerly of it vexed Margaret. There was simply no excuse for his looking at her in that way. It irritated her: and she was almost as angry with him for doing it as she would have been with him for not doing it.

Therefore, she bent a flushed face toward the fire, her mouth pouting. Then it rounded slowly into a sanguine O, which of itself suggested osculation, but in reality stood for “observe!” For the

paper which Billy had thrown into the fire had fallen under the gas-logs, and she remembered his guilty start.

"After all," said Margaret, "it's none of my business."

So she eyed the paper wistfully.

"It may be important," she considerably remembered. "It ought not to be left there."

So she fished it out with a big paper-cutter.

"But it can't be very important," she dissented afterward, "or he wouldn't have thrown it away."

So she looked at the superscription on the back of it.

Then she gave a little gasp and unfolded the paper and read it by the firelight.

Miss Hugonin subsequently took credit to herself for not going into hysterics. She had some reason: for she found the paper a duplicate of the one which Billy had taken out of the secret drawer, but with his name set in the place of hers. At the last, it seemed, Frederick R. Woods had relented toward his nephew.

Margaret laughed a little: then she cried a little: then she did both together. Afterward she sat in the firelight, puzzled and excited and penitent, and assured herself that she was happier than she had ever been in her life.

"He had it in his pocket, he had it in his pocket, my brave, strong, beautiful Billy did, when he asked me to marry him. It was King Cophetua wooing the beggar-maid,—and the beggar was an impudent, ungrateful, idiotic little piece! She ought to be spanked. She ought to go down on her knees to him, in sackcloth, and tears, and ashes, and all sorts of penitential things. She will, too,—after, of course, he has made the proper sort of apologies. For I can't have him getting too uppish just because he is a millionaire, and I'm a pauper. Oh, but I'm glad!"

She caressed the paper that had rendered the world such a desirable place to live in,—caressed it tenderly and rubbed her cheek against it. That was Margaret's way of showing affection.

Then she read it through again, for sheer enjoyment of those beautiful, incomprehensible words that disinherited her. How sensible of Uncle Fred! she thought. Of course, he had forgiven Billy; who wouldn't? What lovely language Uncle Fred used! quite prayer-booky, she considered it. Then she considered Uncle Fred a pig-headed meddler, even now, with other people's business.

For the will in Billy's favor was dated a week earlier than the one they had found in the secret drawer. The document in Margaret's hand was

worthless, mere spoiled paper. At the last Frederick R. Woods' pride had conquered his love.

"Oh, the horrid old man!" Margaret wailed; "he's left me everything he had! How dare he disinherit Billy! I call it rank impertinence. Oh, but the dear, dear boy!" Miss Hugonin crooned, in an ecstasy of tenderness and woe. "He found this first will in one of the other drawers, and thought *he* was the rich one, and came in a large whirl of joy to ask me to marry him, and I was horrid to him! Now, what a mess I've made! I've called him curs and fortune-hunters, and I've told him I love another man, and he'll never ask me to marry him now, for he probably thinks he couldn't stand having such a vixen around the house. And I love him, I worship him, I adore him! And if only—!"

Fate needed help. Margaret lifted the two wills, scrutinised them closely, and then looked at the fire, interrogatively.

"It's penal servitude or whatever they do to you in penitentiaries for quite a number of years," she said. "But, then, he really couldn't tell any one, you know. No Southern gentleman is going to allow a lady to be locked up in jail. And if he knew—if he knew I didn't and couldn't consider him a fortune-hunter or any of the other things I just happened to call him conversationally,—*why*, then, I really believe he would."

Whatever she believed he would do, the probability of his doing it seemed highly agreeable to Miss Hugonin. She smiled at the fire in the most friendly fashion, and held out one of the folded papers.

"Yes," said Margaret, "it is really all rather simple now, for I am quite sure he will."

A Woman Assumes Too Much

MR. WOODS did not toss feverishly about his bed all through the silent watches of the night. He was very miserable, but he was also twenty-six. That is an age when the blind bow-god deals no fatal wounds and tortures no insomniac victims. It is an age to suffer poignantly, an age wherein to aspire to the dearest woman on earth, to write halting verses about her, to lose her, to deal liberally in the clichés of cynicism, to hear the chimes at midnight,—and, for that matter, the milk-carts in the dawn,—and after it all, to sleep like a top.

So Billy slept. And kind Hypnos loosed through the gates of ivory a dream that lifted him to a delectable land where Peggy was nineteen, and had never heard of Kennaston, and was unbelievably sweet and dear and beautiful. But presently they and the Colonel put forth to sea,—on a great carved writing-desk,—fishing for sharks, which the Colonel said were very plentiful in those waters; and Fred-

erick R. Woods climbed up out of the sea, and said Billy was a fool and must go north to college; and Peggy said that was impossible, because seventeen hundred and fifty thousand children had to be given an education apiece, and they could not spare one for Billy; and a missionary from Zambesi Land came out of one of the secret drawers, and said Billy must give him both of his feet, because M. Pierre Louys needed them for his working-girls' classes; and thereupon the sharks poked their heads out of the water, and began, in a deafening chorus, to cry, "Feet, feet, feet!" And Billy woke with a start, and found it was only the birds chattering outside in the dawn.

Then he was miserable.

He tossed, and groaned, and dozed, and smoked cigarettes, until he could stand it no longer. He got up and dressed, in profanely punctuated desperation, and went for a walk in the gardens.

The day was clear as a new-minted coin. It was not yet aired, not wholly free from the damp savor of night, but low in the east the sun was taking heart. A mile-long shadow footed it with Billy Woods in his paces through the amber-chequered gardens. Actæon-like, he surprised the world at its toilet, and its fleeting grace somewhat fortified his spirits.

But his thoughts pestered him like gnats. The

things he said to the roses it is not necessary to set down.

After a vituperative half-hour or so Mr. Woods was hungry. He came back toward Selwoode; and upon the terrace in front of the house he found Kathleen Saumarez.

During the warm weather, one corner of the terrace had been converted, by means of gay red-and-white awnings, into a sort of living-room. There were chairs, tables, sofa-cushions, bowls of roses, and any number of bright-colored rugs. Altogether, it was a cosy place, and the glowing hues of its furnishings were very becoming to Mrs. Saumarez, who sat there writing industriously.

It was a thought embarrassing. . . . The last time they had been alone together was when, six years ago, these two had severed amorous relations with a rather spectacular quarrel. So they had avoided each other yesterday, both tacitly combining to stave off the flat inevitable compromise as to those old heroics. . . . And now, somehow, their eyes met for a moment, and these two young people laughed frankly, and the awkwardness was gone.

"Kathleen," said Mr. Woods, with conviction, "you are a dear."

"You broke my heart," said she, demurely, "but I am going to forgive you."

Mrs. Saumarez was not striving to be clever now. And, heavens (thought Billy), how much nicer she was like this! It was not the same woman: her thin cheeks flushed arbutus-like, and her rather metallic voice was grown low and gentle. Billy brought with him memories: and for the moment she seemed again Kathleen Eppes,—Kathleen Eppes in the first flush of youth, eager, trustful and joyous-hearted, as he had known her years ago. Since then, he reflected, the poor old girl had eaten of the bread of dependence, and probably had found it salt enough: she must have paid for it daily, by enduring a thousand petty slights, a thousand petty insults, and by smiling under them as only a woman can. But she appeared now to have forgotten that shrewd Kathleen Saumarez who must earn her livelihood as best she might. She was bestowing upon him a purely unprofessional smile.

"I was sorry when I heard you were coming," she said irrelevantly, "but I am glad now."

Mr. Woods was still holding her hand. There stirred in his pulses the thrill which Kathleen Eppes had always wakened,—a thrill of memory now, a mere wraith of emotion. He was thinking of a certain pink-cheeked girl with crinkly black-brown hair, and eyes that he had likened to chrysoberyls,—and he wondered what had become of her. This was not she. This was assuredly not Kathleen, for this

woman had a large mouth,—a humorous and kindly mouth, it was true, but undeniably a large one,—whereas Kathleen's mouth had been quite perfect and rather diminutive than otherwise. Had he not rhymed of it often enough to know?

They stood gazing at each other for a long time; and in the back of Billy's brain lines of his old verses sang themselves to a sad little tune,—the verses that reproved the idiocy of all other poets, who had very foolishly written their sonnets to other women. Yet, as the jingle pointed out,

Had these poets ever strayed
In thy path, they had not made
Random rhymes of Arabella,
Songs of Dolly, hymns of Stella,
Lays of Lalage or Chloris,—
Not of Daphne nor of Doris,
Florimel nor Amaryllis,
Nor of Phyllida nor Phyllis,
Were their wanton melodies:
But all of these,—
All their melodies had been
Of thee, Kathleen.

Would they have been? Billy thought it improbable. The verses were really very silly; and, recalling the big, blundering boy who had written them, Billy began to wonder—somewhat forlornly,—whither he, too, had vanished. He and the girl he had gone mad for both seemed rather mythical,—as legendary as King Pepin or Dame Mélusine. . . .

“Yes,” said Mrs. Saumarez,—and she startled

him: "I fancy they are both quite dead by now. Billy, don't laugh at them!—don't laugh at those dear earnest children! I—somehow, I couldn't bear that, Billy."

"Kathleen," said Mr. Woods, in admiration, "you are a witch. I was not laughing, though, my dear. I was developing quite a twilight mood over them,—a plaintive, old-lettery sort of mood, you know."

She sighed a little. "Yes,—I know." Then her eyelids flickered in a parody of Kathleen's glance that Billy noted with a queer tenderness. "Come and talk to me, Billy," she commanded. "I am an early bird this morning, and entitled to the very biggest and best-looking worm on the place. You are only a worm, you know,—we are all worms. Mr. Jukesbury told me so only last night, though he made an exception in my favor, for it appears I am an angel—"

"Why, but of course," said Mr. Woods, gallantly.

"Yes, he was amorously inclined last night, the tipsy old fraud. It is really shameless, Billy, the amount of money he gets out of Miss Hugonin,—for temperance and morality and the deserving poor. Do you know, I rather fancy he classes himself under that last head? And it may be he is poor enough,—though I don't know, with all the big contributions that go through his hands,—but de-

serving!" Mrs. Saumarez snapped her fingers. "That, anyhow, I know about. I've talked to girls that have worked for him."

"Eh? Shark, eh?" queried Mr. Woods, in some discomfort.

She nodded. "Just as fishy, but more clinging. Say, an octopus. About getting money, though, he is as bad as Sarah Haggage: and everybody knows what a bloodsucker she is. There really is no telling, Billy, how much that ponderous old catamaran has picked up here and there. She wallows about looking like a dissipated ragbag: but I have a notion that a sight of her bank account would surprise people. For the Haggage is a disease that all well-meaning rich persons are exposed to,—'more easily caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad.' Depend upon it, Billy, those two will have every penny they can get out of your uncle's money."

"Peggy's so generous," he pleaded. "She wants to make everybody happy,—bring about a general millennium, you know."

"She pays dearly enough for her fancies," said Mrs. Saumarez, in a hard voice. Then, after a little, she cried, suddenly: "Oh, Billy, Billy, it shames me to think of how we lie to her, and toady her, and lead her on from one fine-sounding scheme to another!—all for the sake of the money we can

pilfer incidentally. We are all arrant hypocrites, you know: and I am no better than the others, Billy,—not a bit better. But my husband left me in that hopeless poverty which is complicated with the need of staying respectable. An Eppes, you see, couldn't resort to the pavements: it simply isn't done. Besides, as yet no infamous seducer has ever turned up to tempt me. So I lie, and toady, and have a bureau write me drivelling talks about things I don't understand, for drivelling women to listen to, and I stay respectable by pawning self-respect. And that, as the world goes, is generally thought a very little price to pay, isn't it, Billy?"

To all which Mr. Woods replied merely, "I see,—I see," very slowly; and his eyes stayed friendlily meditative. He could not deal justice here: that pink-cheeked, crinkly haired girl stood between them, and shielded Kathleen Saumarez. He was only sorry.

"And this fellow Kennaston?" he asked, after a moment.

"Mr. Kennaston is a man of really wonderful genius," said Mrs. Saumarez. "Of course, Miss Hugonin is glad to assist him in publishing his books,—it is an honor to her that he permits it. They have to be published privately, you know, as the general public isn't capable of appreciating such dainty little masterpieces—"

"H'm, yes; he struck me as being an unusually nice chap," said Mr. Woods, untruthfully. "I dare say they'll be very happy."

"Who?" Mrs. Saumarez demanded.

"Why—er—I don't suppose they'll make any secret of it," Billy stammered, in tardy repentance for over-hasty speaking. "Peggy told me last night she had accepted him."

Mrs. Saumarez turned to re-arrange a bowl of roses. She seemed to have some difficulty over it.

"Billy," she spoke, inconsequently, and with averted head, "an honest man is the noblest work of God,—and the rarest."

Billy groaned.

"Do you know," said he, "I've just been telling the roses in the gardens yonder the same thing about women? I'm a misogynist this morning. I've decided no woman is worthy of being loved."

"That is quite true," she assented, "but, on the other hand, no man is worthy of loving."

Billy smiled.

"I have likewise come to the conclusion," said he, "that a man's love is like his hat, in that any peg will do to hang it on; also, in that the proper and best place for it is on his own head. Oh, I assure you, I have vented any number of cheap cynicisms on the helpless roses. And yet,—will

you believe it, Kathleen?—it doesn't seem to make me feel a bit better."

"It is still more like his hat," she declared, "in that he wants a new one every year." Then she rested her hand on his, in a half-maternal fashion. "What is the matter, boy?" she asked, softly. "I don't like to see you in this vein. Better leave phrase-making to us phrase-mongers."

Her voice rang true, and compassionate, and tender, and all that a woman's voice should be. Billy trusted her.

"I have been an ass," he stated, rather tragically. "Oh, not an unusual ass, Kathleen,—just the sort men are always making of themselves. You see, before I went to France, there was a girl I cared for a great deal. And I let a quarrel come between us,—a foolish, trifling, idle little quarrel, Kathleen, that we might have made up in a half-hour. But I was too proud, you see. No, I wasn't proud, either," Mr. Woods amended: "I was simply pig-headed and mulish. So I went away. And yesterday I saw her again and realised that I—still cared. That's all, Kathleen. It isn't an unusual story." And Mr. Woods laughed, mirthlessly, and took a turn on the terrace.

"The story may not be unusual— But as yet," said Mrs. Saumarez, "I certainly don't think I understand it—"

"Oh, it's simple enough," Billy assured her. "You see, she— Well, I think she would have married me once. Yes, she cared for me once. And I quarreled with her,—I, conceited young ass that I was, actually presumed to dictate to the dearest, sweetest, most lovable girl upon earth, and tell her what she must do and what she mustn't do. I!—good Lord, I! I, who wasn't worthy to sweep a crossing clean for her!—who wasn't worthy to breathe the same air with her!—who wasn't worthy to exist in the same world she honored by living in! Oh, I *was* an ass in those days! But I've paid for it!—oh, yes, Kathleen, I've paid, and I'll pay more dearly yet before I've done. I planned yesterday to make a quick getaway,—as you probably saw—"

"I noticed, of course—"

"—And I couldn't. I give you my word, I found I could no more keep away from her than I could have spread a pair of wings and flown away. She doesn't care a pig's bristle for me now: but I can no more give up loving her than I can give up eating my dinner. That, too, is not a pretty simile, Kathleen, but it expresses the way I feel toward her. It isn't merely that I want her: it is more than that. I simply can't imagine living without her. . . . I wonder, though, if that is a feeling which any woman can understand?"

"I think I understand," she said, when he had

ended. "And, Billy, I am almost sorry. It is dear of you, Billy, to care for me still, but—but I am almost sorry you care so much. I am not half worth it, boy dear. And I really don't know what to say. You"—and Kathleen, also, got aid of the formula,—“you must let me think.”

Mr. Woods gave an inarticulate sound. The face she turned to him was perplexed, half-sad, fond, a little pleased, and queerly compassionate. It was Kathleen Eppes who sat beside him: the six years were as utterly forgotten as the name of Magdalen's first lover. And Kathleen seemed a girl again, a girl that sat there listening—with a heart that fluttered, you would have said,—to the wild talk and stammered dithyrambics of a blundering boy.

The ludicrous horror of these anachronisms stunned Mr. Woods. Women were really quite too absurd. Well, he would simply tell her the truth, the truth that would put an end to this infernal foolishness.

He parted his lips. He moistened them. How do you, though, he wondered, with politeness reveal to a woman that she has made a pitiable fool of herself in assuming for one moment that you have not long ago ceased to care about her favors? Before poor Billy loomed the fantastic requirements of “being a gentleman.” He knew that he could

no more tell her, outright, of her mistake than he could strike her in the face. One must, instead, be tactful. . . .

"Kathleen—!" he said, vaguely.

"No, I can't talk about it now, Billy. Go away, boy dear! Go away for a little, and let me think! I am not an emotional woman, but I am on the verge of hysterics and shrieking fits just now, for—for several reasons. Go in to breakfast, Billy! I really want to be alone. You have made me very proud and—and sorry, I think, and glad, and—and—oh, I don't know. But please go now,—please!"

Billy went.

In the living-hall he paused to inspect a perfectly familiar picture with peculiar interest. Since one had to be a gentleman (he thought, forlorn as only twenty-six can be), he must for the present perjure himself in as plausible a manner as might be possible; please God, having done what he had done, he would lie to her like a gentleman: and if the worst came to the worst, and she accepted him, he must wait patiently for his first chance to make Kathleen start the quarrel which would enable him to escape in the guise of a broken-hearted but freed gentleman. Such tactics had saved Billy thrice, with Blanche and Florence and even with that reso-

lute little Helen; these unintentional betrothals were not necessarily fatal: for through exercising tact, he reflected, you could always provoke any sort of fiancée into the statement that she hoped never again to lay eyes on you. Then you had only to take her seriously, and to depart in polite dejection without wasting a minute. . . . Oh, yes, he would get out of this, quite probably, with tact. . . . But, if only he had never got into this!

A vision in incredible violet ruffles, coming down to breakfast, saw him, and paused on the stairway, and flushed, and laughed deliciously.

Billy stared at her: and his heart gave a great bound and then appeared to stop for an indefinite time.

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Woods, in his soul. "And I thought I was an ass last night! Why, last night, in comparison, I displayed intelligence that was almost human! Oh, Peggy, Peggy! if I only dared tell you what I think of you, I believe I would gladly die afterward,—yes, I am sure I would. You really haven't any right to be so beautiful!—it isn't fair to us, it isn't considerate of a person's peace of mind!"

But the vision was peeping over the bannisters at him, and the vision's eyes were sparkling with a lucent mischief, and a half-hushed contralto was demanding of him:

"Oh, where have you been, Billy boy, Billy boy?
Oh, where have you been, charming Billy?"

And Billy's baritone answered her:

"I've been to seek a wife——"

and broke off in a groan.

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Woods.

BREAKFAST Margaret enjoyed. The fact that every one of her guests was more or less miserable she found, for widely various reasons, to be not displeasing. Mrs. Saumarez, though, puzzled her, for Margaret could think of no reason for that lady's manifest agitation when Kathleen eventually joined the others.

But for the rest, the hopeless glances that Hugh Van Orden cast toward Margaret caused Adèle to flush, and Mrs. Haggage to become despondent and speechless and astonishingly rigid; and Petheridge Jukesbury's vaguely apologetic attitude toward the world seemed to Miss Hugonin infinitely diverting. Kennaston she pitied a little: but his bearing toward her ranged ludicrously from that of proprietorship to that of supplication, and, moreover, she had decided she was furious with him for having hinted at various times that Billy was a fortune-hunter.

Margaret was quite confident by this that she

had never believed Felix Kennaston,—“not really, you know,”—having privily argued out the matter at some length the night before, and having attained her conclusion by a course of reasoning not wholly peculiar to her among women.

Mr. Woods was, to all appearance, sunk in the Slough of Despond deeper than ever plummet sounded. Margaret thought this quite nice of him; it was a delicate tribute to her that he ate virtually nothing: and the fact that Hugh Van Orden and Petheridge Jukesbury—as she believed,—acted in precisely the same way for precisely the same reason, merely demonstrated, of course, their overwhelming conceit and presumption.

So, sitting in the great Eagle's shadow, she ate a largish quantity of marmalade,—being used to begin the day in this ungodly fashion,—and gossiped like a brook trotting over sunlit pebbles. She had planned for the house-party a pulverising surprise which, in due time, she intended to explode: subsequently Billy was to apologise for his conduct, and then they were to live happily ever afterward.

She had not yet decided what he was to apologise for; that was his affair. His conscience ought to have told him, by this, wherein he had misbehaved himself: and if his conscience had failed in this plain duty, why then, of course, he would have to apologise for his lack of proper sensibility.

After breakfast Margaret went to her father's rooms, according to her usual custom, for the old gentleman was never visible until noon. She had news for Colonel Hugonin.

What time she divulged it, the others sat on the terrace, and Mr. Kennaston read to them, as he had promised, from his *Defence of Ignorance*. It proved a welcome diversion for more than one of the party. Mr. Woods, especially, esteemed it a godsend: it staved off misfortune for at least a little: so he sat at Kathleen's side in silence, trying desperately to be optimistic about the chance of her refusing him; and trying desperately not to see the tiny wrinkles, the faint crow's feet, which Time had sketched in her face as a memorandum of the work Time meant to do shortly.

Billy consoled himself with the reflection that he was very fond of Kathleen: but, oh (he thought), what worship and adoration he would for the future accord this woman if only she declined—positively—to have anything to do with him!

We ought not to miss hearing Mr. Kennaston's discourse. He was not famous at this time, when *Men Who Loved Alison* was unthought of: but it is generally conceded, since his accession to notoriety and being "collected," that even then his

“style” was wonderfully clever; and that his detractors—who complained that the “style” of this period was mere word-twisting, a mere inversion of familiar by-words,—were actuated either by blindness or the basest jealousy. Let us listen, then, and be duly edified as Felix Kennaston reads aloud, and the birds twitter about him, like a forecast of critics, in the clear morning.

“It has been for many years,” Mr. Kennaston began, “the custom of patriotic gentlemen in quest of office to point with pride to the fact that the schoolmaster is abroad in the land, in whose defence they stand pledged to draw their salaries and to fight to the last gasp for reëlection. These lofty platitudes, while trying to the lungs, doubtless appeal to a certain class of minds. But, indeed, the schoolmaster is not abroad; he is domesticated in every village in America, where each hamlet has its would-be Shakespeare at hand, and each would-be Shakespeare has his *Hamlet* by heart. Thus, erudition is everywhere rampant, intrepid scholars even peruse that better class of monthly periodicals which are not really magazines but museums, and valuable information is pasted up in the street-cars so that he who rides may read.

“And Ignorance—beautiful, divine Ignorance,—is forsaken by a generation that clamors for the

truth. And what value, pray, has this Truth that we should lust after it?"

He glanced up, in an inquiring fashion. Mr. Jukesbury, meeting his eye, smiled and, with a shake of the head, said "Fie, fie!" very placidly.

To do him justice, he had not the least idea what Kennaston was talking about.

"I am aware," the poet continued, with an air of generosity, "that many pleasant things have been said about truth-telling. In fact, our virile decade has turned its back relentlessly upon the decayed; and affects a manly contempt for 'the lost art of lying' and all the other dicta of that effete genius of the nineties by whom manliness was more honored in the breach than the observance. Still, without advancing any Wilde theories, one may fairly claim that truth is a jewel,—a jewel with many facets, differing in appearance from each point of view.

"And while 'Tell the truth and shame the devil' is a very pretty sentiment, it need not necessarily mean anything. The devil, if there be a personal devil—and it has been pointed out, with some show of reason, that an impersonal one could scarcely carry out such enormous contracts,—would, in all probability, rather approve than otherwise of indiscriminate truth-telling. Irritation, as the psychologists and the dentists inform us, is at the root of all

evil; and there is nothing more irritating than to hear the truth about one's self. It is bad enough, in all conscience, to be insulted, but the truth of an insult is the barb that prevents its retraction. 'Truth hurts' has the high pathos of understatement. It not only hurts but infuriates. It has no more right to go naked in public than any one else. Indeed, it has less right; for truth-telling is natural to mankind,—as is shown by its prevalence among the younger sort, such as children and cynics,—and, as Shakespeare long ago forgot to tell us, a touch of nature makes the whole world embarrassed."

At this point Mrs. Haggage sniffed. She considered he was growing improper. She distrusted nature, as the thing people talked about when they had been up to something.

"Truth-telling, then, may safely be regarded as an unamiable indiscretion. In art, the bare truth must, in mere gallantry, be accorded a petticoat, of paint or of printed goods, to hide her nakedness; and in life, truth is a disastrous virtue that we have united to commend and avoid. Nor is the decision unwise: for man is a gregarious animal, who knows that friendship is, at best, a feeble passion and must be treated with the care due an invalid. It is impossible to be quite candid in conversation with any man; and with a woman it is

absolutely necessary that your speech should be candied.

"Truth, then, is probably the least desirable of associates. Upon this point of course nobody can speak from experience.

"For even if any madman wished to know the truth about anything, the desire could scarcely be fulfilled. The Lord Verulam of Elizabeth's time, who might have written Shakespeare's plays had his other misdoings and talents permitted it, quotes Pilate as inquiring, 'What is Truth?'—and then not staying for an answer. Pilate deserves all the praise he has never received. Nothing is quite true. Even Truth lies at the bottom of a well and not infrequently in other places. And no assertion is one whit truer than is its opposite."

A mild buzz of protest rose. At which Kennaston smiled, and lifted a silencing finger.

"We have, for example," he pointed out, "a large number of time-tested proverbs, the small coin of conversation, received everywhere, whose value no one disputes. They are rapped forth like profanities, with an air of settling the question, and you also, once and forever. Well! there is safety in quotations. But even the devil can cite Shakespeare to his purpose. 'Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day' agrees ill with 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'; and it is difficult

to reconcile 'Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves' with the equally familiar 'Penny-wise, pound-foolish.' Yet the sayings are equally untrue: any maxim is, perforce, a general statement, and therefore fallacious, and therefore universally acceptable. Art is long, and life is short, but the voiced idiocies concerning them are both insufferable and eternal. We must remember that a general statement is merely a snapshot at flying truth, an instantaneous photograph of a moving body. It may be the way that a thing is; but it is never the way in which any one ever saw that thing, or ever will. This is, of course, a general statement.

"As to present events, then, it may be assumed that no one is either capable or desirous of speaking the truth; why, then, make such a pother about the truth as to the past? There we have carried the investigation to such extremes that nowadays very few of us dare believe anything. Opinions are difficult to secure when a quarter of an hour in the library will prove either side of any question. Formerly, people had a few opinions, which, if erroneous, were at least universal. Nero was not considered an immaculate man. Lucretia Borgia and the Deluge were currently believed to have caused the death of quite a number of persons. And George Washington, it was confidently stated,

was the continent and virtuous father of nothing except a virtuous continent. But now all these comfortable illusions have been destroyed by 'the least little men who spend their time and lose their wits in chasing nimble and retiring truth, to the extreme perturbation and drying up of the moistures.' "

Kennaston looked up for a moment; and Billy Woods, who had counted seven wrinkles and was dropping off into a forlorn doze, started violently. His interest then became abnormal.

"There are," Mr. Kennaston complained, rather reproachfully, "too many inquiries, doubts, investigations, discoveries, and apologies. There are paliations of Tiberius, facts about Joan of Arc, rehabilitations of Aaron Burr. Messalina, it appears, was a grievously misunderstood woman, and Nebuchadnezzar a really exemplary monarch: not even Judas Iscariot has escaped the imputation of meaning well. As for Shakespeare, he was any of the other Elizabethan poets, and most of the peerage. Information of this sort crops up on every side. Even the newspapers are infected: truth lurks in the patent medicine advertisements, and sometimes creeps stealthily into the very editorials.

"So the sad tale goes. Ignorance—beautiful, divine Ignorance,—is forsaken by a generation that clamors for the truth. The earnest-minded person

has plucked Zeus from heaven, and evicted the Mænad from the wood, and dredged Poseidon out of his deep-sea palace. The conclaves of Olympos, it appears, are merely nature-myths; the stately legends clustering about the gods of old turn out to be a rather elaborate method of expressing the fact that it occasionally rains. The heroes who endured a pantheon's high angers and jests and tragic loves are delicately veiled allusions to the sun,—surely, a very harmless topic of conversation, even in Greece: and the monsters, 'Gorgons and Hydras and Chimæras dire'—these heroes' big, vain opponents,—are but personified frosts. Mythology—the poet's necessity, the fertile mother of his inventions,—has become a series of atmospheric phenomena, and the labors of Hercules prove to be a dozen weather bulletins.

"Is it any cause for wonder, that under this cheerless influence our poetry stays either silent or unsold? The true poet must be ignorant, since information is the grief of rhyme. And it is only in dealing with—"

Kennaston paused. Margaret had appeared in the vestibule, and behind her stood her father, looking very grave.

"We have made a most interesting discovery," Miss Hugonin announced to the world at large. "It appears that Uncle Fred left all his property to

Mr. Woods here. We found the will only last night. I'm sure you'll all be interested to learn I'm a pauper now, and intend to support myself by plain sewing. Any work of this nature you may choose to favor me with, ladies and gentlemen, will receive my most earnest attention."

She dropped a courtesy. The scene appealed to that taste for the dramatic which twenty-three forms carefully on the worst models.

Billy came toward her quickly.

"Peggy," he demanded of her, in the semi-privacy of the vestibule, "will you kindly tell me the meaning of this da— this idiotic foolishness?"

"Why, this," she explained, easily, and exhibited a folded paper. "I found it in the grate last night."

He inspected it with large eyes. "That's absurd," he said, at length. "You know perfectly well this will is not worth the paper it's written on."

"My dear sir," she informed him, "you are vastly mistaken. You see, I've burned the other one." She pushed by him. "Mr. Kennaston, are you ready for our walk? We will finish the Defence some other time. Wasn't it the strangest thing in the world—?" Her deep and mellow voice died away from Billy's hearing, as she and Kennaston disappeared into the gardens.

Billy then voiced a prophecy as to his extramundane future.

Meanwhile Colonel Hugonin had given the members of his daughter's house-party some inkling as to the present posture of affairs. They were gazing at Billy Woods rather curiously. He stood in the vestibule of Selwoode, staring after Margaret Hugonin: but they stared at him, and above his round, sleek, yellow head they saw the Eagle sculptured upon the doorway.

Mr. Woods stood in the vestibule of his own house.

“**B**Y GAD!” said Colonel Hugonin, very grimly, “anybody would think you had just lost a fortune instead of inheriting one! Wish you joy of it, Billy. I ain’t saying, you know, we shan’t miss it, my daughter and I,—no, begad, for it is a nice pot of money. But if somebody else had to have it, I had much rather it was you, my boy, than a set of infernal, hypocritical, philanthropic sharks, and I am glad Frederick has done the right thing by you.”

The old gentleman was standing beside Mr. Woods in the vestibule of Selwoode, some distance away from the others. And Colonel Hugonin was sincere. It was not to be expected that the thought of facing the world at sixty-five with virtually no resources beyond his half-pay could seem a prospect to evoke joy. The Colonel had never hoarded thriftily, and once Margaret was provided for, he had quite put aside all uncongenial eco-

conomic considerations. So over the immediate outlook, he perforce pulled a grave face, because the Colonel's views on money matters were undistorted by youth and amorous delusions.

But he was honestly fond of Billy, and the Colonel was already estimating that with Billy for a son-in-law affairs would not after all be altered materially. In any event, there was balm to be had, even now, of the fact that this potential threatening of Colonel Hugonin's prospects had wholly obliterated the prospects of those cultured, broad-minded, and philanthropic persons who had aforetime set his daughter to requiring of him a perusal of John Charteris' books.

Billy was pretty well aware how monetary matters stood with the old wastrel; and the sincerity of the man affected Billy as disinterested sentiments would not have done. Mr. Woods shook hands, with entirely unnecessary violence.

"You're a trump, that's what you are!" he declared; "oh, yes, you are, Colonel! You're an incorrigible, incurable old ace of trumps,—the very best there is in the pack,—and it's entirely useless for you to attempt to conceal it."

"Gad—!" said the Colonel.

"And don't you worry about that will," Mr. Woods advised. "I can't explain things just now, but it's all right. You just wait—just wait till I've

seen Peggy," Billy urged, in augmenting exasperation, "and I'll explain everything."

"By gad—!" said the Colonel. But Mr. Woods was half-way out of the vestibule.

Mr. Woods was in an unenviable state of perturbation.

He could not quite believe that Peggy had destroyed the will; since even she, he estimated, must here have found second thought an avenue which led away from felony. But if she had actually impoverished herself through indulgence in testamental arson, it struck him as a high-handed proceeding, entailing penalties made and provided by the law to cover just such cases,—penalties of whose nature he was entirely ignorant and did not care to think. For all he knew, that angel might have let herself in for a jail sentence.

Billy pictured that queen among women! that paragon! with her glorious hair cropped and her plump pink-tipped little hands set to beating hemp,—he had a shadowy notion that the lives of all female convicts were devoted to this pursuit,—and Billy groaned in horror.

"In the name of Heaven!" Mr. Woods demanded of his soul, "what possible reason could she have had for this new insanity? And in the name of Heaven, why couldn't she have put off her tête-à-tête with Kennaston long enough to explain? And

in the name of Heaven, what does she see to admire in that putty-faced, grimacing ass, any way! And in the name of Heaven, what am I to say to this poor old man here? I can't explain that his daughter isn't in danger of being penniless, but merely of being locked up in jail! And in the name of Heaven, how long does that outrageous angel expect me to remain in this state of suspense!"

Billy groaned again, and paced the vestibule. Then he retraced his steps, shook hands with Colonel Hugonin once more, and, Kennaston or no Kennaston, set out to find her.

Mrs. Haggage Continues the Theme

BUT when Mr. William Vartrey Woods came out upon the terrace, then Sarah Ellen Haggage stopped him, with a queer blending of diffidence and resolve.

The others, by this time, had disappeared in various directions, puzzled and exceedingly uncertain what to do. Indeed, to congratulate Billy in the Colonel's presence would have been tactless: and, on the other hand, to condole with the Colonel without seeming to affront the wealthy Mr. Woods was almost impossible. So they temporised and inconspicuously departed,—all save Mrs. Haggage.

She alone remained to view Mr. Woods with fond, maternal eyes: for as he paused impatiently—with the sculptured Eagle above his head,—she perceived that he was a remarkably handsome and intelligent young man.

“My dear Billy,” she reproved him, with asthmatic tenderness, “as an old, old friend of your mother's, aren't you going to let me tell you how re-

joiced Adèle and I are over your good fortune? It isn't polite, you naughty boy, for you to run away from your friends as soon as they have heard this wonderful news. And such news it was,—such a manifest intervention of Providence! My heart has been fluttering, fluttering like a little bird, Billy, ever since I heard it.”

In testimony to this fact, Mrs. Haggage clasped one hand to a capacious bosom, and freely exhibited the whites of her eyes. Her smile, however, remained unchanged and ample.

“Er—ah—oh, yes! Very kind of you, I'm sure!” said Mr. Woods.

“I never in my life saw Adèle so deeply affected by anything. The sweet child was always so fond of you, you know, Billy.”

“Come now, but that is very kind of her, too,” said Mr. Woods.

“Yes, now I so distinctly remember hearing her speak of you many and many a time when you were in that dear, delightful, wicked Paris, and her wondering when you would come back to your friends,—not very grand and influential friends, Billy, but sincere, I trust, for all that.”

Mr. Woods said he had no doubt of it.

“So many people,” Mrs. Haggage informed him, confidentially, “will pursue you with adulation now that you are wealthy. Oh, yes, you will find that

your wealth makes a great difference everywhere. But not with Adèle and me,—no, dear boy, despise us if you will, but my child and I are not mercenary. Money makes no difference with us: we shall be the same to you that we always were,—sincerely interested in your true welfare, overjoyed at your present good fortune, prayerful as to your brilliant future, and delighted to have you drop in any evening to dinner.”

Mr. Woods at this point indicated the rapture with which he viewed the possibility of dining with them some day.

“—For we do not consider money the chief and only blessing: no, don’t tell me that most people are different, Billy, for I know it very well, and many is the tear that thought has cost me. We live in a most mercenary world, my dear boy: but our thoughts, at least, are set on higher things, and I trust we can afford to despise the merely temporal blessings of life, and I want you to remember that our humble dwelling is always open to the son of my old, old friend, and that there is always a jug of good whiskey in the cupboard.”

Billy thanked her, with an angry heart.

“And this,”—to give you the gist of his meditations,—“this is Peggy’s beloved mentor! Oh, Philanthropy, are thy protestations, then, all void and empty, and are thy noblest sentiments—every

one of 'em,—so full of sound and rhetoric, so specious, so delectable,—are these, then, but dicers' oaths!"

Aloud, "I'm rather surprised, you know," he said, slowly, "that you take it just this way, Mrs. Haggage. I should have thought you'd have been sorry on—on Miss Hugonin's account. It's jolly of you, of course,—oh, awfully jolly, and I appreciate it at its true worth, I assure you. But it is a bit awkward, isn't it, that the poor girl will be practically penniless? I really don't know whom she'll turn to now."

"She will come with me, of course," said Mrs. Haggage. "Margaret is quite like a daughter to me, you know. Of course, she and the Colonel will come with us,—at least, until affairs are a bit more settled. Even afterward—well, we have a large house, Billy, and I don't see that they would be any better off anywhere else."

Billy's emotions were complex.

"You big-hearted old parasite," his own heart was singing, "you have been pilfering from Peggy for years,—pilfering right and left with both hands! But you have loved her all the time, because all the time you were a really intelligent person: and so, the moment she is in trouble you are ready to take both her and the Colonel,—whom, by the way, you must most cordially abominate,—and to share your

pilfered crusts with 'em and—having two extra mouths to feed,—probably pilfer a little more outrageously in the future! You are a sanctimonious old hypocrite, you are, and a pious fraud, and a slatternly delusion, and a snare that any blind idiot could see through; and you and Adèle have nefarious designs on me at this very moment: but I think I'd like to kiss you!"

Indeed, Mr. Woods came quite near doing so. She loved Peggy; and he loved every one who loved Peggy.

But he compromised by shaking hands energetically, for a matter of two minutes, and entreating to be allowed to subscribe to some of her deserving charitable enterprises,—any one she might mention,—and so left the old lady a little bewildered but very much pleased.

17.

Match-Making May Be Avian

BILLY descended through an avenue of stone griffins, on his way into the gardens, in pursuit of Margaret. But he got, for the present, only as far as to the bottom of the marble stairway. There he came upon Kathleen Saumarez, who, indeed, was waiting for him there: and there his heart went down into his boots.

He comprehended, on a sudden, that he was one of the richest men in America. It was a staggering thought. Also, Mr. Woods' views, at this moment, as to the advantages of wealth, might have been interesting.

Kathleen stood silent for an instant, eyes down-cast, face flushed. She was somewhat tremulous.

"Billy," she asked, almost inaudibly, "do—do you still want—your answer?"

The birds sang about them. Spring triumphed in the gardens. Kathleen looked very womanly and very pretty.

To all appearances, it might easily have been a

lover and his lass met in the springtide, with the appropriate sentimental turmoil. But Billy lacked the elation and the perfect contentment and the disposition to burst into melody that is currently supposed to seize upon enamored swains at such moments. He merely wanted to know if at any time in the remote future his heart would be likely to resume the discharge of its proper functions. It was standing still now.

For poor old Kathleen, he forlornly comprehended, was "getting on," she must be thirty at the very least; and she was hard-up, too. It would be the craziest sort of optimism to hope that Kathleen could ever be beguiled into any serious squabble with a wealthy fiancé. And Billy foreknew that in a minute at most he was going to be the poor old girl's fiancé.

However, "Can you ask,—dear?" His words, at least, could lie gallantly: for one had—confound it!—to be a gentleman.

The woman looked up into Billy's face. After years of battling with the world, here for the taking was peace and luxury and wealth, and—as Kathleen thought,—a love which had endured since Billy first discovered that the most important part of his college life was not included in the formal curriculum. Yet she shrank from him, a little, and clenched her hands before she spoke.

"Why, then, Billy, my answer is yes."

"If only I didn't have to put up with being a gentleman," thought Mr. Woods, "I would smash your silly face."

Then he kissed her.

"My dear," said he, aloud, "I'll try to make you happy. And—and you don't mind, do you, if I leave you now?" queried this ardent lover. "You understand, it's absolutely necessary I should see—see Miss Hugonin about this will business. You don't mind very much, do you,—darling?" Mr. Woods inquired of his betrothed.

"No," she replied. "Not if you must,—dear?"

Billy went away, lugging in his breast a heart of lead.

Kathleen stared after him, and gave a straining, wringing motion of her hands. She had done what many women do daily: the thing is common and sensible and universally commended: but, in her own eyes, the draggled trollop of the pavement was neither better nor worse than she. Women have these notions.

At the entrance of the next walkway Billy encountered Felix Kennaston,—alone and in the most contentedly whimsical of humors.

18.

Mr. Kennaston Speaks the Parabasis

BUT we had left Mr. Kennaston in company with Miss Hugonin, at the precise moment she inquired of him whether it were not the strangest thing in the world—referring thereby to the sudden manner in which she had been disinherited.

The poet laughed and assented. Afterward, turning north from the front court, they descended past the shield-bearing griffins,—and you may depend upon it that each shield is adorned with a bas-relief of the Eagle,—which guard the broad stairway leading to the formal gardens of Selwoode. The gardens stretch northward to the confines of Peter Blagden's estate of Gridlington; and—unless it were that primitive garden which Adam lost,—it is not easy to imagine a goodlier place.

On this particular forenoon, however, neither Miss Hugonin nor Felix Kennaston had eyes for its comeliness; silently they braved the griffins, and in silence they skirted the fish-pond,—silver-crin-

kling in the May morning,—and passed through cloistral ilex-shadowed walks, and amphitheatres of green velvet, and terraces ample and mellow in the sunlight, silently. The trees pelted them with blossoms: pedestaled in leafy recesses, satyrs grinned at them apishly, and the arrows of pot-bellied cupids threatened them, and fauns piped for them ditties of no tone. Birds were about shrill avocations overhead, and everywhere the heatless, odorful air was a caress: but for all this concourse of agreeabilities, Miss Hugonin and Mr. Kennaston were silent and rather fidgety.

Margaret was hatless,—so that much of the glow of the spring sun appeared this morning to be entangled in her hair,—and violet-clad: and the gown, like most of her gowns, was all tiny tucks and frills and flounces, diapered with semi-transparencies, and seemed unsubstantial and foam-like, mere violet froth. As she came starry-eyed through the gardens, and as that impudent wind trifled with her hair, she might have been some lady of Oberon's court en route from Elfland to bedevil mortals, without having yet decided with just which teasing magic to begin.

They came presently through a trim, yew-hedged walkway to a summer-house covered with vines, into which Margaret peeped and declined to enter, on the ground that it was entirely too chilly and

gloomy and exactly like a mausoleum; but nearby they found a semi-circular marble bench, about which a group of elm-trees made a pleasant shadow splashed at just the proper intervals with sunlight.

So Margaret sat down; and then pensively moved to the other end of the bench, because a slanting sunbeam fell there. Now chance decreed it necessary to blast Mr. Kennaston's dearest hopes, she thoughtfully endeavored to distract his attention from his own miseries—as far as might be possible,—by showing him how exactly like an aureole her hair was in the sunlight. Margaret had a kind heart.

Kennaston stood before her, smiling a little. He was the sort of man to appreciate the manœuvre.

"My lady," he asked, very softly, "haven't you any good news for me on this wonderful morning?"

"Excellent news," Margaret assented, with a cheerfulness that was not utterly free from trepidation. "I've decided not to marry you, beautiful, and I trust you're properly grateful. You see, you're very nice, of course, but I'm going to marry somebody else, and bigamy is a crime; and, anyhow, I'm only a pauper, and you'd never be able to put up with my temper— Now, beautiful, I'm quite sure you couldn't, so there's not a bit of use in arguing it. Some day you'd end by strangling me, which would be horribly disagreeable for me,

and then they'd hang you for it, you know, and that would be equally unpleasant for you. Fancy, though, what a good advertisement it would be for your poems!"

She was not looking at him. Margaret was far too busily employed getting the will of Frederick R. Woods (which she had carried all this while) into the little silver mesh-bag hanging at her waist. She had no time to be regarding Felix Kennaston. There was such scant room in the bag: her purse took up so much space that there was scarcely any left for the folded paper: the affair really required her closest and undivided attention. Besides, she had not the least desire to meet the eyes of Felix Kennaston just now.

"Adorable child," his voice was pleading, up yonder, "look at me!"

But she did not.

She felt that at the moment she could have looked at a gorgon, say, or a cockatrice, or any other trifle of that nature, with infinitely greater composure. The pause which followed, therefore, Margaret devoted to a scrutiny of his shoes and to sincere regret that their occupant was not a mercenary man who would be glad to be rid of her.

"Adorable child," observed the poet's voice, "now I am vain enough to hope that you are saying this through misdirected kindness. For, are you not

saying this because of what has happened in regard to your money affairs? Believe me, my dear, that makes no difference with me. It is you I love—you, the woman of my heart,—and not a certain, and doubtless desirable, amount of metal disks and dirty paper.”

“Now I suppose you’re going to be very noble and very nasty about it,” observed Miss Hugonin, resentfully. “That’s my main objection to you, you know, that you haven’t any faults I can recognise and feel familiar and friendly with.”

“My dear,” he protested, “I assure you I am not the person to be cajoled, and hocus-pocused, and, in short, illaqueated, by any such honeyed unvarieties. Come, put a name to it!”

At that, she raised velvet eyes to his—with a visible effort, though,—and smiled.

“I’m tremendously fond of you, beautiful, but—well, you see, I prefer somebody else.”

“Ah!” said Kennaston, in a rather curious voice. “The painter chap, eh?”

Then Margaret’s face flamed in a wonderful glow of shame and happiness and pride that may well have made the surrounding roses hopelessly jealous. A quaint mothering look awoke in her large eyes as Margaret thought, remorsefully, of how unhappy Billy Woods must be at this very moment, and of how big he was and of his general niceness: and

she desired most heartily that this Kennaston person would make his scene, and have it over with. Who was he, forsooth, to be keeping her away from Billy? She wished she had never heard of Felix Kennaston.

All these reflections prompted just one word.

"Yes," said Margaret.

"You are," said Mr. Kennaston, with conviction in his voice, "a dear."

One may assert that Margaret was surprised.

But the poet had taken her hand and had kissed it reverently, and then sat down beside her. He was frankly grateful to her for refusing him: and, with the mask of affectation slipped aside, she saw in him another being.

"I am an out-and-out fraud," he confessed, with the gayest of smiles. "I am not in love with you, and I am inexpressibly glad that you are not in love with me. Oh, Margaret, Margaret— You don't mind if I call you Margaret, do you? I shall have to, in any event, because I like you so tremendously now that we are not going to be married. Well, you have no idea what a night I spent. I consider it most peculiar and unsympathetic of my hair not to have turned gray. I thought you were going to have me, you see."

Margaret was as yet too much astonished to be angry.

"But, last night!" she presently echoed. "Why, last night you didn't know I was poor!"

He waggled a long forefinger. "That made no earthly difference," he assured her. "Of course, it was the money—and in some degree the moon,—that induced me to talk love to you. I acted on the impulse of the moment; just for an instant, the novelty of doing a perfectly sensible thing—and marrying money is universally conceded to come under that head,—appealed to me. So I did it. But all the time I really preferred—when it came actually to having the same woman around day in and day out, you know,—Kathleen Saumarez. Why, the moment I left you, I began to comprehend not even you—and you are quite the most fascinating and generally adorable young person I ever knew,—I began to comprehend, I say, not even you could ever make me forget that fact. And I was very properly miserable. It is extremely queer," Mr. Kennaston continued, after an interval of meditation, "but falling in love appears to be the most utterly inexplicable, utterly reasonless thing one ever does. You can usually think of some more or less plausible palliation for mayhem, or forgery, or robbing a church, or even for committing suicide,—but no man can ever explain how he happened to fall in love. He simply did it."

Margaret nodded sagely. She knew.

"Now you," Mr. Kennaston was pleased to say, "are infinitely more beautiful, younger, more amiable, and in every way more attractive than Kathleen. I recognise these facts clearly, but recognising them does not appear, somehow, to alter the fact that I am more or less in love with Kathleen. I think I have been—more or less, you know,—in love with her all my life. We were boy and girl together, Margaret, and—and, I give you my word, I cannot explain it even to myself. But I am an unaspiring creature of habit. I simply got into the habit of wanting Kathleen, I suppose, of wanting to have her around. I never of course wanted to marry her. But it annoyed me quite terribly when she married that silly Spaniard. It was so difficult to make him understand, you know. In any event, now that I am nearly thirty-three—"

"But, beautiful, you know that you are thirty-six this next December!"

"Am I? Well, well, but I always did envy you practical people, with your ready head for figures! Anyhow, even by your count, I am not what the metaphorically minded describe as a chicken. And so, I have about decided to marry Kathleen after all, because, while I may not be actually in love with her, she most annoyingly prevents my being in love with anybody else—"

Margaret's gaze was intent upon him. "Yet,"

she marvelled, "you made love to me very tropically."

With unconcealed pride, Mr. Kennaston assented. "Didn't I?" he said. "I was in rather good form last night, I thought. Of course, in view of your being so young and unmarried, I had to be in my remarks a little extra-idiotic. But it is really the delivery that counts."

"And you were actually prepared to marry me?" she asked,—*"even after you knew I was poor?"*

"I couldn't very well back out," he submitted. "Possibly I would have cooked up some excuse later. But for the time being, I was regaling myself with fond reveries upon your adoration of me. So, of course, I was nobly going to marry you and make you very happy. But how dear—oh, how unutterably dear it was of you, Margaret, to decline to be made happy in any such fashion!" And Mr. Kennaston paused to chuckle and to regard her with esteem and affection.

But still her candid eyes weighed him, and transparently found him wanting.

"You are thinking, perhaps, what an unutterable cad I am?" he suggested.

"Yes,—you are rather by way of being a cad, beautiful. But I can't help liking you, somehow. I dare say it's because you're honest with me. Only, you weren't— Nobody ever seemed to be

honest with me except you, and now I know you weren't. Oh, beautiful, aren't I ever to have any real friends?" she pleaded, wistfully.

Kennaston had meant a deal to her: he had been the one man she trusted. She had gloried in his fustian rhetoric, his glib artlessness, his airy scorn of money: and now all this proved pinchbeck. On a sudden, too, awoke some comprehension of how near she had come to caring seriously about Felix Kennaston. The thought troubled her.

"My dear," he answered, kindly, "you will have friends by the carload now that you are poor. It was merely your money that kept you from having any. You see," Mr. Kennaston went on, with somewhat the air of one climbing upon his favorite hobby, "money is the one current writ of nobility. In America anyhow, the rich compose, of necessity, our peerage. It is quite natural. One cannot hope for an aristocracy of intellect, if only for the reason that not one person in a thousand has any: and birth does not count for much even here, where we talk so much about it. Even here the parvenu accords the aristocrat, at most, the tribute of buying for himself, from the handiest genealogist, an imaginative pedigree. Even in Lichfield, they tell me, the grandfathers of the actual civic and social overlords were either repulsively deserving or dishonest persons,—who started life on a farm, and studied

Euclid by the firelight and did all the other priggish things: they thought would look well in a biography, or else met with marked success in embezzlement. So money, after all, is even here our only standard; and when a woman is as rich as you were yesterday she cannot hope for any more friends than if she were a czarina or a leper or, for that matter, a sea-serpent. No, you could have plenty of flatterers, and servants, and magniloquent adorers, and anything, in fine, but friends."

"I don't believe it," said Margaret, half angrily, "I don't believe one word of it. Money is not everything. And in fact, when you think about the big things in life, the things that really count—"

The poet laughed. "You are repeating, like the loveliest of echoes, the sort of drivel I declaimed yesterday. I am honest now. The best of us, Margaret, cannot help being damaged by contact with the wealthy. For, money gives supreme, unquestioned power: and we who know that cannot look upon rich people as being quite like us. We must toady to them a bit, Margaret, whether we want to or not. The Eagle intimidates us all."

"But what has poor old Uncle Fred's crest to do with these little moral reflections?"

Kennaston searched his pockets. After a moment he produced a dollar bill, and showed her the Eagle on it.

"There," he said, gravely, "is the original of the Woods Eagle. Do you remember what Shakespeare—one always harks back to Shakespeare to clinch an argument, because not even our foremost actors have been able to conceal the fact that he was, as somebody in Dickens acutely points out, 'a dayvilish clever fellow,'—do you remember, I say, what Shakespeare observes as to this very Eagle?"

Miss Hugonin shook her small head till it glittered in the sunlight like a topaz. She cared no more for Shakespeare than does the average woman, and she was never quite comfortable when he was alluded to.

"He says," Mr. Kennaston quoted, solemnly:

"The Eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby,
Knowing that with the shadow of his wing
He can at pleasure still their melody."

"That's nonsense," said Margaret. "I haven't the least idea what you're talking about, and I don't believe you have either."

He waved the dollar bill with a heroical gesture. "Here," he asserted, "is the Eagle. And by the little birds, I have not a doubt that Shakespeare meant charity and independence and kindness and truth and the rest of the standard virtues. That is, anyhow, as plausible as the interpretation of the average commentator. The presence of money

chills these little birds,—ah, it is lamentable, no doubt, but it is true.”

“I don’t believe it,” said Margaret, again—because, of course, that fact had always appeared to her quite to establish the worthlessness of any possible contention.

But now his hobby, rowelled by opposition, was spurred to Pegasean flights.

“We cringe to the Eagle!” said he. “Eh, well, why not? The Eagle is very powerful and very cruel. In the South yonder, the Eagle has penned over a million children in his factories, where day by day he drains youth and health and life itself out of their tired bodies; in sweatshops, men and women are toiling for the Eagle, giving their lives for the pittance that he grudges them; in countless mines and mills, the Eagle is trading human lives for coal and flour; in Wall Street yonder, the Eagle is juggling as he elects with all of life’s necessities. Look whither you may, men die that the Eagle may grow fat. So the Eagle thrives, and daily the rich grow richer and more powerful, and the end—”

Kennaston paused, staring into vacancy:

“Eh, well,” said he, with a smile and a snap of his fingers, “the end rests upon the knees of the gods. But there must be an end some day, with a quite glorious smash-up, all around, and such heroic havoc as will find me, I hope, already snugly

tucked into a comfortable coffin. My faith in this revolution's inevitability, you see, is qualified by my sense of being just the sort of person that revolutionists kill first of all. Yes, very certainly the day will come when every big bank-balance will be the owner's death-warrant, and when the Eagle, as the populace elliptically phrases it, will get his. But that day is not here yet, and meanwhile, you cannot blame us if we cringe to the Eagle that is master of the world. It is human nature to cringe to its master: and while human nature is not always an admirable thing, it is, I believe, rather widely distributed."

Margaret did not return his smile. Like any sensible woman, she never tolerated opinions that differed from her own.

"Still, you may go on talking, beautiful," she observed, "for it isn't as though there were any known method of stopping you."

"My dear, I simply want to point a somewhat obvious moral. The folk who have clustered about you here at Selwoode are honest enough as honesty goes nowadays; kindly as any of us dare be who have our own way to make among stalwart and determined rivals; and generous as common-sense permits in a world where the first of every month finds the butcher and the baker and the candlestick-maker rapping at the door with their

little bills: but they cringe to money. It is very wrong of them, my dear lady, and in extenuation I can only plead that they can no more help cringing to money than can I or any other moderately conditioned person breathing."

"All this is very crude and very cynical—"

"But unfortunately, it is true. We always cringe to money; which is humiliating. And the sun always rises at an hour when sensible people are abed and have not the least need of its services; which is foolish. And what you and I, my dear child, are to do about rectifying either one of these vexatious circumstances, I am sure I don't know. Still, we can, at least, be honest—"

"No, beautiful; that is the one accomplishment you lack."

"These incivilities do not become the lips of a hostess; and they check the flow of invaluable precepts. As I was saying, then, let us console ourselves at will with moral observations concerning the number of pockets in a shroud and the difficulty of a rich man's entering into the kingdom of Heaven: but, with an humble and reverent heart, let us admit that, in the world we know, money rules. Its mere presence awes us. And if we are candid we must concede that we very unfeignedly envy and admire the rich; we must grant that money confers a certain distinction on a man, be he

the veriest ass who ever heehawed a platitude, and that we cannot but treat him accordingly, you and I."

"I!" said Miss Hugonin, indignant.

"Why, even you, my dear, who had more money than you knew what to do with, could not treat rich and poor alike. You have been friendly, of course, with the Beechinors and all the less desirable and more crapulous branches of your Musgrave family-tree, and in fact, with every one of your poor cousins. You were delighted to have them drop in to dinner, and liberal enough with the claret when they did. But when the magnate came, there was a magnum of champagne, and an extra lamp in the drawing-room, and—I blush to declare it,—a far more agreeable hostess at the head of the table. Dives is such good company, you see. And speaking for my own sex, I defy any honest fellow to lay his hand upon his waistcoat and swear that it doesn't give him a distinct thrill of pleasure to be seen anywhere in public with a millionaire."

But Margaret shook her head. "Magnates are as silly as the others," she said, cryptically, "when nobody is listening,—especially me."

"Daily," said Kennaston, "all of us truckle in the Eagle's shadow,—the shadow that lies across Selwoode. With the Eagle himself, your hangers-on are so lucky as to have no real concern: Schlemihl-

like, we deal only in shadows. Yet even the shadow of the Eagle is a rather terrible thing,—a shadow that chills faith, and charity, and independence, and kindliness, and truth, and even common honesty.”

“What—? Oh, yes, I dare say,” observed Margaret, who had been thinking over divers matters while Mr. Kennaston enjoyed his favorite pastime, of talking.

“All those impressive, high periods!” he lamented, “and you have not even listened!”

“Well, but,” she cruelly declared, “when you try to be specially eloquent you are always rather silly and tiresome. Go away, beautiful. You make me awfully tired with these general observations, and I don’t care for you in the least. Go and talk your nonsense to Kathleen. I shall be here—on this very spot,” Margaret added, with commendable precision and an unaccountable increase of color, “if—if any one should happen to ask.”

Then Kennaston laughed merrily.

“You are delicious,” he commented. “It will always be a grief and a puzzle to me that I am not mad for love of you. It is unreasonable of me,” he complained, sadly, and shook his head, “but I prefer Kathleen. And I am quite certain that somebody will ask where you are. I shall describe to him the exact spot—”

Mr. Kennaston paused, with an air of apology.

"If I were you," he suggested, pleasantly, "I would move a little—just a little—to the left. That will enable you to obtain with even more æsthetic well doing the benefit of the sunbeam which is falling—quite by accident, of course,—upon your hair. And you were perfectly right, Margaret, in selecting that hedge as a background. Its dark green sets you off to perfection."

He went away chuckling. He felt that Margaret must think him the deuce of a fellow.

19.

Which Leads to Bronchial Irritation

SHE did not, though.

"The idea of his suspecting me of such unconscionable vanity!" she reflected, properly offended. Then, "Anyhow, a man has no business to know about such things," she continued, with rising indignation. "I believe Felix Kennaston is as good a judge of chiffons as any woman. That's effeminate, I think, and catty and absurd. I don't believe I ever liked him,—not really, that is. For, what would Billy care about sunbeams and backgrounds, I'd like to know! He'd never even notice them. Billy is a *man*. Why, that's just what father said yesterday!" Margaret observed, and afterward laughed happily. "I suppose old people are right sometimes,—but, dear, dear, they're terribly unreasonable at others!"

Having thus uttered the ancient, undying plaint of youth, Miss Hugonin moved a matter of two inches to the left, and smiled, and waited contentedly. It was barely possible some one might

come that way; and it is always a comfort to know one is not in appearance exactly horrific.

Also, there was the spring about her; and, chief of all, there was in her heart a queer fluttering that was not unpleasant. In fine, she was unreasonably happy without any solid and logical excuse.

But ten minutes later, Margaret saw Mr. Woods in the distance striding across sunlit terraces, and she was seized with conviction that their interview was likely to prove a stormy one. There was in Billy's gait an ominous stiffness.

"Oh, dear, dear! He's in a temper now, and he'll probably be just as disagreeable as it's possible for anyone to be. I do wish men weren't so unreasonable. He looks exactly like a big, blue-eyed thunder-cloud just now,—just now, when I'm sure he has every cause in the world to be very much pleased, after all I've done for him. He makes me awfully tired. I think he's very ungrateful. I think I am rather afraid."

In fact, she was. Now that the meeting which she had anticipated these twelve hours past was actually at hand, now woke in her breast unreasoning panic. Miss Hugonin considered, and caught up her skirts, and whisked into the summer-house, and there sat down in the darkest corner, and devoutly wished Mr. Woods in Crim Tartary, or

Jericho, or, in a word, any location other than the gardens of Selwoode.

Billy came presently to the opening in the hedge and stared at the deserted bench. He was undeniably in a temper. But, then, how becoming it was! thought someone.

"Miss Hugonin!" he said, coldly.

Evidently (thought someone) he intends to be just as nasty as possible.

"Peggy!" said Mr. Woods, after a pause.

Perhaps (thought someone) he won't be very nasty.

"Are you hiding from me, you little devil?" said Mr. Woods.

Someone rearranged her hair complacently.

But there was no answer, save the irresponsible chattering of the birds, and with a sigh Billy turned upon his heel.

Then, by the oddest chance in the world, Margaret coughed.

Perhaps it was damp in the summer-house; or perhaps there was some passing bronchial irritation; or perhaps it was mere absent-mindedness. In any event, Margaret insisted afterward—very positively, too,—that she didn't cough at all.

Results of Coughing in a Summer-House

“WELL!” Mr. Woods observed, lengthening the word.

In the intimate half-light of the summer-house he loomed prodigiously big. He was gazing downward in careful consideration of three fat tortoise-shell pins and a surprising quantity of yellow hair, which was virtually all he could see of Miss Hugonin’s person: for that young lady had suddenly become a huddled assemblage of violet ruffles, and had discovered new and irresistible attractions in the mosaics under her feet.

Billy’s arms were crossed on his breast, and his right hand caressed his chin meditatively. By and by, “I wonder now,” he reflected, aloud, “if you can think of any possible reason why you shouldn’t be locked up in the nearest lunatic asylum?”

“You needn’t be rude, you know,” a voice observed from the neighborhood of the ruffles, “because there isn’t anything you can do about it.”

Mr. Woods ventured a series of inarticulate ob-

servations. "But why?" he concluded, desperately. "But why, Peggy?—in Heaven's name, what's the meaning of all this?"

She looked up. Billy was aware of two large blue stars; his heart leapt; and then he recalled a pair of gray-green eyes that not long ago had regarded him in much the same fashion, and he groaned.

"I was unfair to you last night." The ring of her odd, deep voice, and the richness and sweetness of it, moved him queerly. "Yes, I was most unfair, Billy. You asked me to marry you when you thought I was a pauper; and—and Uncle Fred *ought* to have left you the money. It was only on account of my being so fascinating that he didn't, you know. I really owed it to you. And after the way I talked to you—so long as I had the money,—I—and, anyhow, it's very disagreeable and eccentric and horrid of you to object to being rich!"

She had not thought it would be like this. He seemed so stern.

But, "Isn't that exactly like her?" Mr. Woods was demanding of his soul. "She thinks she has been unfair to me,—to me, for whom she doesn't care a button, mind you. So she hands over a fortune to make up for it, simply because that is the first method which comes to hand. Now, isn't that perfectly unreasonable, and fantastic, and mag-

nificent, and incredible, and, in short, isn't that Peggy all over? Why, God bless her, her heart is bigger than a barn-door. Oh, it is no wonder that fellow Kennaston was grinning just now, when he sent me to her. He can afford to grin."

Aloud he stated: "You are an angel, Peggy, that is what you are. I have always suspected it, and I am glad now to know it for a fact. But in this prosaic world not even angels are allowed to burn up people's wills for recreation. Why, bless my soul, child, you— Why, there is no telling what trouble you might have got into!"

Miss Hugonin pouted. "You needn't," she suggested, helpfully, "be such a grandfather."

"But it is a serious business," he insisted. At this point Billy began to object to her pouting, as distracting one's mind from the subject under discussion. "It—why, it is—"

"It's what?" she pouted, even more rebelliously.

"Crimson," said Mr. Woods, considering,—“oh, the very deepest, duskiest crimson, such as you can't get in tubes. It is a color was never mixed on any palette. It is— Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon."

"I think you ought to," said Margaret, primly. Nevertheless, she had considerably brightened.

"Of course," Mr. Woods continued with a fine color, "I can't take the money. That's absurd."

"Is it?" she queried, idly. "Now, I wonder how you are going to help yourself?"

"Simplest thing in the world," he assured her. "You see this match, don't you, Peggy? Well, now you are going to give me that paper I see in that bag-thing at your waist, and I am going to burn it till it's all nice, soft, feathery ashes that can't ever be probated. And then the first will, which is practically the same as the last, will be allowed to stand, and I'll tell your father all about the affair, because he ought to know, and you will have to settle with those colleges. And in that way," Mr. Woods submitted, "Uncle Fred's last wishes will be carried out just as he expressed them, and there needn't be any trouble,—none at all. So give me the will, Peggy."

Margaret's heart sank.

However, "Yes?" said she, encouragingly; "and what do you intend doing afterward?"

"I—I shall probably live abroad," said Billy. "Cheaper, you know."

And here (he thought) was an excellent, an undreamed-of opportunity to inform her of his engagement. He had much better tell her now and have done. Mr. Woods opened his mouth and looked at Margaret, and closed it. Again she was pouting in a fashion that distracted one's mind.

"That would be most unattractive," said Miss Hugonin. "You're very stupid, Billy, to think of living abroad. Billy, I think you're almost as stupid as I am. I've been very stupid, Billy. I thought I liked Mr. Kennaston. I don't, Billy,—not that way. I've just told him so. I'm not—I'm not engaged to anybody now, Billy. But wasn't it stupid of me to make such a mistake, Billy?"

That was a most interesting mosaic there in the summer-house.

"I don't understand," said Mr. Woods.

Perhaps he dared not understand. Her eyes downcast, her foot tapping the floor gently, Margaret was not just now the person for him to regard with mere rationality. She, too, was trembling a little; and she was a little afraid and quite unutterably happy; and outwardly she was very much the tiny lady of Oberon's court, very much the coquette quintessentialised. . . .

"Don't you understand?—oh, you silly Billy!" She was peeping at him meltingly from under her lashes.

"I—I am imagining vain things," said Mr. Woods. "I—oh, Peggy, Peggy, I think I must be going mad."

He stared hungrily at the pink and startled face that lifted toward his. It could not be possible,

this thing that for a moment he had imagined. He had misunderstood. . . .

And now, just for a little (reflected Mr. Woods), let my eyes drink in those dear felicities of tincture and glitter and curving, and meet just for an instant more the splendor of those eyes that have all April in them, and rest just for a little upon that sanguine, close-grained, petulant mouth: and then I will tell her.

"Peggy—" he began, in a flattish voice.

"They have evidently gone," said the voice of Mr. Kennaston; "yes, those beautiful, happy young people have foolishly deserted the very prettiest spot in the gardens. Let us sit here, Kathleen."

"But I'm not an eavesdropper," Mr. Woods protested, half angrily.

By noble sentiments Margaret was not always properly impressed.

"Please, Billy," she pleaded, in a shrill whisper, "please let's listen. He's going to propose to her now, and you've no idea how funny he is when he proposes. Oh, don't be so pokey, Billy,—*do* let's listen!"

But Mr. Woods had risen with remarkable celerity and was about to leave the summer-house.

Margaret pouted. Mrs. Saumarez and Mr. Kennaston were seated, within easy earshot of the sum-

mer-house, on the bench which Miss Hugonin had just left. And when that unprincipled young woman finally rose to her feet, it was with a toss of the head and with the reflection that, while to listen might not be honorable, it would at least be amusing. One grieves to admit it, but with Billy's scruples as to eavesdropping Margaret had not the slightest sympathy.

Then Kennaston said: "Why, you are mad, Kathleen. Woods wants to marry you! Why, but he is heels over head in love with Miss Hugonin!"

Miss Hugonin turned to Mr. Woods, with a little intake of the breath.

MRS. SAUMAREZ laughed unpleasantly. "No," she said. "Billy cared for me, you know, a long time ago. And this morning he told me he still cared. Billy doesn't pretend to be a clever person, you see, so he can afford to practise some of the brute virtues, such as constancy and fidelity."

There was in her eyes a challenging flame, but Kennaston let the stab pass unnoticed. To do him justice, he was thinking less of himself, just now, than of how this news would affect Margaret: and his face was grave and strangely tender, for in his own fashion he was fond of Margaret.

"It is nasty, very nasty," he said, at length, and his voice was puzzled. "Yet I could have sworn to it yesterday—" Kennaston paused, and he laughed. "She was an heiress yesterday, and to-day she is nobody. And Mr. Woods, being wealthy, can afford to indulge in the virtues you commend so

highly, and, with a fidelity that is most edifying, returns again to his old love. And she welcomes him—and the Woods millions,—with open arms. It is quite affecting, is it not, Kathleen?”

“You needn’t be disagreeable,” she observed.

“My dear Kathleen, I assure you I am not angry. I am merely a little sorry for human nature. I could have sworn Woods was honest. But rogues all, rogues all, Kathleen! Money rules us in the end; and now the parable is fulfilled, and Love the prodigal returns to make merry over the calf of gold. Confess,” Mr. Kennaston queried, with a smile, “is it not strange an all-wise Creator should have been at pains to fashion this brave world about us for little men and women such as we to lie and pilfer in? Was it worth while, think you, to arch the firmament above our rogueries, and light the ageless stars as candles to display our antics? Let us be frank, Kathleen, and confess that life is a trivial farce ignobly played in a stately temple.” And Mr. Kennaston laughed again.

“Let us be frank!” Kathleen cried, with a little catch in her voice. “Why, it isn’t in you to be frank, Felix Kennaston! Your life is nothing but a succession of poses,—of shallow, foolish poses meant to hoodwink the world and at times yourself. For you do hoodwink yourself, don’t you, Felix?”

"To do that daily is my duty, alike as a citizen, a poet and a communicant—"

"And now," she went on, quickly, "you are trying to make me think you the very deuce of a cynic and a tolerant man of the world, aren't you? And you are hinting that I accepted Billy because of his money. Well, it is true I would not marry him if he were poor. But he is now far from being poor. And he cares for me. And I am fond of him. And so I shall marry him, and make him as good a wife as I can. So there!"

Mrs. Saumarez faced Kennaston with a sort of half-uneasy defiance. He was smiling.

"I have heard it rumored in many foolish tales and jingling verses," said Kennaston, after a little, "that in this world exists a thing called love. And I have also heard, Kathleen, that it sometimes enters into the question of marriage. It appears I was misinformed."

"No," she answered, slowly, "there is a thing called love. I think women are none the happier for knowing it. To a woman, it means to take some man—some utterly commonplace man, or, perhaps, only an idle poseur such as you are, Felix,—and to set him upon a pedestal, and to bow down and worship him; and to protest faithfully to everybody, and to herself, that in spite of appearances her idol really hasn't feet of clay, or that, at any rate, it is

the very nicest clay in the world. For a time she deceives herself, Felix. Then the idol topples from the pedestal and is broken, and she sees that it is all clay, Felix,—clay through and through,—and her heart breaks with it.”

To this sentiment Kennaston bowed his head, with the civility due an old acquaintance. “It is true,” said he; “that is the love of women in every branch of really popular art.”

“To a man,” she went on, dully, “it means to take some woman—the nearest woman who isn’t actually deformed,—and to declaim pretty speeches to her and to make her love him. And after a while—” Kathleen shrugged. “Why, after a while,” said she, “he grows tired and looks for some other woman.”

“It is true,” said Kennaston,—“yes, it is true, just as a general axiom without any unpleasant personal application, that some men love in that fashion.”

There ensued a silence. It was a long silence, and under the tension of it Kathleen’s composure snapped like a cord which has been stretched to the breaking point.

“Yes, yes, yes!” she cried, suddenly; “that is how I have loved you, Felix Kennaston, and that is how you have loved me! Ah, Billy told me what happened last night! And that—that was why

I—" Mrs. Saumarez paused, and regarded him curiously. "You do not make a very noble figure, just now, do you?" she asked, with careful deliberation. "You were ready to sell yourself for Miss Hugonin's money, weren't you? And now you must take her without the money. Poor Felix! Ah, you poor, petty liar, who have overreached yourself so utterly!"

And Kathleen began again to laugh, but somewhat shrilly, almost hysterically.

"You are wrong," he said, with a flush. "It is true I asked Miss Hugonin to marry me. But she—very wisely, I dare say,—declined to contract the alliance."

"Ah!" Kathleen said, slowly. Then,—and it will not do to inquire too closely into her logic,—Mrs. Saumarez spoke with considerable sharpness. "She is a conceited little cat. I never in all my life knew a girl to be quite as conceited as she is. Positively, I don't believe she thinks there is a man breathing who is good enough for her."

Kennaston grinned. "Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen!" he observed; "you are simply delicious."

And Mrs. Saumarez colored prettily, and tried to look severe, and could not, for the insane reason that, while she knew Kennaston to be flippant and weak and unstable as water, and generally worthless, yet for some occult cause she loved him as

tenderly as though he had been a paragon of every manly virtue. Some persons say it is by a very kindly provision of Nature that all women are created capable of doing this illogical thing and that most of them do it daily.

"It is true," the poet said, at length, "I have played no heroic part. And I don't question that I am all you think me. But that doesn't matter, bless you! No, Kathleen, it is base of you thus to attempt to deceive me. For however regrettable a sort of person I am, you are heels over head in love with me: and on account of your being in that idiotic state of mind, you are going to marry, not that fine Woods animal, but Felix Bulmer Kennaston."

"He's worth ten of you!" she cried, scornfully.

"Twenty of me, perhaps," Mr. Kennaston assented, "but this isn't altogether a question of elementary arithmetic. You don't love him, Kathleen. You are considering marrying him for his money. You are considering doing what I, in my artless unpremeditated way, attempted to do yesterday. But you won't do it, Kathleen. You know that I need you, my dear, and—unreasonably enough, God knows!—you love me."

Mrs. Saumarez regarded him intently for a considerable length of time.

By and by, "Yes," she said, and her voice was

sullen; "I have got into the habit of caring for you. I ought to care ten times as much—"

"Lord, Lord! here we are back again in decimals!"

"—I ought to care forty times as much, then, for Billy. But I don't. I shall ask him to release me from my engagement— What about Muriel Alardyce, though? Have you really broken off with her?"

"My dear, there was never anything to break off. Besides, I have."

"And that Winwood girl?"

"I have repeatedly told you how utterly wrong were your curious notions about Marian. It was merely our common interest in literature—"

"I only wish that I only half believed you— Oh, very well, then!" said Mrs. Saumarez.

He raised her hand to his lips. "You really are a dear," Mr. Kennaston was moved to observe.

"No," Mrs. Saumarez dissented, rather forlornly; "I am a darned idiot. Otherwise, I would not be about to marry you, knowing you as I do for what you are,—knowing that I have not one chance in a hundred of any happiness."

"My dear," he said, and his voice was earnest, "you know at least that whenever you marry anybody else it doesn't do at all. It simply creates an impossible situation for the poor fellow. For fif-

teen years now I have rubbed along without ever being able to fall in love with you or do without you—”

“Or lots of others either.”

“My darling, but you know what women are! A poor fellow simply has no chance when any of you is resolute. But I submit also that what there is in me of good is at its best with you.”

“Yes, yes!” Kathleen said, quickly. “That is so, isn’t it, Felix? And you do care for me, don’t you? Felix, are you sure you care for me,—quite sure? And are you certain, Felix, that you have never cared so much for anyone else?”

Mr. Kennaston was certain. He proceeded to explain his feelings toward her, at some length.

Kathleen listened, with downcast eyes, and almost cheated herself into the belief that the man she loved was all that he should be. But at the bottom of her heart she knew him better than she wanted to know him.

Kennaston and Mrs. Saumarez chatted amicably for some ten minutes. At the end of that period, the twelve forty-five express bellowing faintly in the distance recalled the fact that the morning mail was in, and thereupon, in the very best of humors, they set out for the house. Kathleen by this had utterly forgotten Billy, and was no more thinking of him than she was of the Man in the Iron Mask.

She was with Kennaston; and her thoughts, and glances, and caresses, were all given over to his pleasuring, just as indulgently as Billy's life would have been, one suspects, if its sacrifice could have saved Kennaston from a toothache. He strutted a little, and was a little grateful to her, and—to do him justice,—the tribute she accorded him was received with equanimity and considerable graciousness.

The Eagle at His Worst

MARGARET came out of the summer-house. Billy Woods followed her, in a very moist state of perturbation.

“Peggy—” said Mr. Woods.

But Miss Hugonin was laughing. Clear as a bird-call, she poured forth her rippling mimicry of mirth. They train women well in these matters. Margaret, just now, was considering the undeniable facts that she had loved this clumsy liar, had given up a fortune, had dared all for him, and had (as the phrase runs) flung herself at his head, unavailingly. The shame of it was a physical sickness, a nausea. But now, in this jumble of miseries, in this breaking-up of the earth and of the void heavens, which surged about her and would not be mastered, the girl laughed: and her laughter was care-free and half-languid, like that of a child who is thinking about something else. For they train women well in these matters.

At length Margaret said, in high, crisp accents:

"Pardon me, but I can't help being amused, Mr. Woods, by the way in which hard luck dogs your footsteps. I think Fate must have some grudge against you, Mr. Woods."

"Peggy—" said Mr. Woods.

"Pardon me," she interrupted him, her masculine little chin high in the air, "but I wish you wouldn't call me that. It was well enough when we were boy and girl together, Mr. Woods. But you've developed since—ah, yes, you've developed into such a splendid actor, such a consummate liar, and, after all, such a most unlucky scoundrel that I do not feel really familiar with you now."

And there was not a spark of anger in the very darkest corner of Billy's heart, but only pity,—pity all through and through, that sent little icy ticklings up and down his spine. For she had turned full face to him and Billy could see the look in her eyes.

And it set hot drenching waves of shame and of remorse to surging about his body. For these were tragic eyes. Beneath them her twitching mouth smiled bravely.

"Peggy," he said, "ah, dear, dear Peggy, listen to me—!"

"Why, have you thought of a plausible lie so soon? Dear me, Mr. Woods, what is the use of explaining things? It is very simple. You wanted to marry me last night because I was rich. And

when I declined the honor, you went back to your old love. Oh, it's very simple, Mr. Woods! It's a pity, though,—isn't it?—that all your promptness went for nothing? Why, dear me, you actually managed to propose before breakfast, didn't you? I should have thought that such eagerness would have made an impression on Kathleen,—oh, a most favorable impression. Too bad it hasn't!"

"Listen!" said Billy. "Ah, you are forcing me to talk like a cad, Peggy, but I can't see you suffer—Kathleen misunderstood what I said to her. I didn't mean to propose to her, Peggy. It was a mistake, I assure you. It's you I love, just you. And when I asked you to marry me last night—why, I thought the money was mine, Peggy. I would never have asked you if I hadn't thought that. Ah, you don't believe me, you don't believe me, Peggy, and I swear, I'm telling you the simple truth! Why, I hadn't ever seen that last will, Peggy! It was locked up in that centre place in the desk, you remember. Why—why, but you yourself had the keys to it, Peggy. Surely, you remember, dear?"

But Margaret shook her head; and as aforetime the twitching lips continued to laugh beneath those tragic eyes.

"Clumsy, very clumsy!" she rebuked him. "I see that you are accustomed to prepare your lies in

advance, Mr. Woods. As an extemporaneous liar you are regrettably clumsy. Men don't propose by mistake except in farces. And while we are speaking of farces, don't you think it time to drop the farce of your not knowing about that last will?"

"The farce!" Billy stammered. "You—why, you saw me when I found it!"

"I saw you when you pretended to find it. I saw you when you pretended to unlock that centre place. But now, of course, I know it never was locked. I am very careless about locking things, Mr. Woods. Ah, yes, that gave you a beautiful opportunity, didn't it? So, when you were rummaging through my desk—without my permission, by the way, but that's a detail,—you found both wills, and concocted your little comedy. That was very clever. Oh, you think you're awfully smooth, don't you, Billy Woods? But if you had been a bit more daring, don't you see, you could have suppressed the last one and taken the money without being encumbered by me? That was rather clumsy of you, wasn't it?" Suave, gentle, sweet as honey, was the speech of Margaret as her face lifted a little sidewise; but her eyes stayed tragedies.

"Ah!" said Billy. "Ah, yes,—you think—that." He was careful in articulating his words: and afterward he nodded his head gravely. If that was what

she thought, there seemed no way for him to prove it was not so.

"Why, dear me, Mr. Woods," she retorted, carelessly, "what else *could* I think?"

"Think what you will, Peggy!" he said. "Ah, my dear, think what you will, but don't grieve for it! Why, if I'm all you say I am, that's no reason you should suffer—!"

"Suffer! I suffer!" she mocked him, languidly; and then, like a banjo-string, the tension snapped, and Margaret spoke again, after one long angry gasp.

"Upon my word, you're the most conceited man I ever knew in my life! You think I am in love with you, and am 'suffering,' as you put it, on account of you and your Kathleens—!"

"I only meant—"

"—Yes, you actually think I am in love with you! With *you*! Billy Woods, I wouldn't wipe my feet on you if you were the last man left on earth! I hate you, I loathe you, I detest you, I despise you! Do you hear me?—I hate you. What do I care if you *are* a snob, and a cad, and a fortune-hunter, and a forger, and—"

"Now, Peggy—"

"Well, perhaps you haven't ever forged anything yet; but I'm quite sure you would if you ever got an opportunity. You'd be delighted to do it. Yes,

you would,—you're just the sort of man who *revels* in crime. And you think I'm in love with you! Well, that's the best joke I've heard for a long time. I'm only sorry for you, Billy Woods,—sorry because Kathleen has thrown you over,—*sorry*, do you understand? Yes, since you're so fond of skinny women, I think it's a great pity she wouldn't have you—"

"But, Peggy—"

"Don't talk to me! She *is* skinny. I hope—I quite honestly do hope,—that I know more about that than you. She's as skinny as a beanpole. She's skinnier than I ever imagined it possible for anybody to be. And she pads and rouges till I think it's disgusting, and not half—not *one-half*—of her hair belongs to her, and that half is dyed. But, of course, if you like that sort of thing, there's no accounting for tastes, and I'm sure I'm very sorry for you, even though personally I *don't* care for skinny women. I hate 'em! And I hate you, too, Billy Woods!"

She stamped her foot. . . .

Billy tried to bear with her, for in part he understood.

"Peggy," said he, very gently, "you are wrong—"

"Yes, I dare say!" she snapped at him.

"We won't discuss Kathleen, if you please. But you are wrong about the will. I have told you the

whole truth about that. Yet I don't blame you for not believing me,—ah, no, not I. There seems to be a curse upon Uncle Fred's money. It brings out the worst in all of us. It has changed even you,—and not for the better, Peggy. You have become distrustful, you— Oh, well, we won't discuss that now. Give me the will, and I will burn it before your eyes. That ought to show anybody that you are wrong."

But she had an arrow left for him. "Give it to you! And do you think I'd trust you with it, Billy Woods?"

"Peggy!—now, Peggy, I hadn't deserved that. Be just, at least!"

"Yes, I do know what you'd do with it! You'd take it right off and have it probated or executed or whatever it is they do to wills, and turn me straight out in the gutter. That's just what you're *longing* to do this very moment. Oh, I know, Billy Woods,—I know what a temper you've got, and I know you're keeping quiet now simply because you think that's the most exasperating thing you can possibly do. I wouldn't have such a disposition as you've got for the world. You've absolutely *no* control over your temper,—not a bit of it. You're *vile*, Billy Woods! and I don't believe that in any penitentiary in the wur-wur-world— Yes, you've made me cry, and I suppose you're very

proud of yourself. Aren't you proud? Don't stand staring at me like a stuck pig, but answer me when I talk to you! Aren't you *proud* of making me cry? Aren't you? Ah, don't talk to me,—don't talk to *me*, I tell you! I don't wish to hear a word you've got to say. I *hate* you. And you shan't have the money, that's flat."

"I don't want it," said Billy. "I've been trying to tell you for the last half-hour I don't want it. Now how many more million times have I got to repeat that? And, in God's name, why can't you talk like a sensible woman?"

"That's right,—swear at me! It only needed that. You do want the money, and when you say you don't you're lying, lying, lying, do you understand! You all want my money. Oh, dear, dear!" Margaret wailed, and she flung back her tear-stained face, and clenched her little hands tight at her sides: "why can't you let me alone! You are all after my money,—you, and Mr. Kennaston, and Mr. Jukesbury, and all of you! Why can't you let me *alone*! Ever since I've had it you've hunted me as if I'd been a wild beast. I haven't had a moment's peace, a moment's rest, a moment's quiet, since Uncle Fred died. They all want my money,—everybody wants my money. Oh, Billy, Billy, why can't they leave me alone!"

"Peggy—!" said he.

But she interrupted him.

"Don't talk to me, Billy Woods! Don't you dare talk to me. I told you I didn't wish to hear a word you had to say, didn't I? Yes, you all want my money. And you shan't have it. It's mine. Uncle Fred left it to me. It's mine, I tell you. I've got the greatest thing in the world,—money! And I'll keep it. Ah, I hate you all,—every one of you,—but I'll make you cringe to me. I'll make you whining little liars amuse me, from this day forth, because I've got the money you're ready to sell your paltry souls for! Oh, and I'll make you cut up most of all, Billy Woods! For I'm rich, do you hear?—I'm very rich. Wouldn't you be glad to marry the rich Margaret Hugonin? Oh, haven't you schemed hard for that? You would be happy if you could do that, wouldn't you? You'd give your kissing and your dirty little soul for that—Ah, what a cur you are! Well, some day perhaps I'll buy you just as I would any other cur. Wouldn't you be glad if I did, Billy? Beg for it, Billy! Beg, little pimp! Beg!"

And Margaret flung back her head again, and laughed shrilly, and held up her hand before him as one holds a lump of sugar before a pug-dog.

Billy's face was ashen.

"Before God!" he said, between his teeth, "for

one, I wouldn't marry you now if you had all the wealth in the world! The money has ruined you, Peggy."

For a while she stared at him. By and by, "I dare say it has," she said, in a strangely sober tone. "I've been scolding like a fishwife. I beg your pardon, Mr. Woods,—not for what I've said, because I meant every word of it; but I beg your pardon for saying it. Don't come with me, please."

Blindly she turned from him. Her shoulders had the droop of an old woman's.

For a while Mr. Woods stared after the tired small figure that trudged straight onward in the sunlight, stumbling as she went. Then a pleached walk swallowed her, and Mr. Woods groaned.

"Oh, Peggy, Peggy!" he said, in bottomless compassion: "oh, my poor little Peggy! What hasn't that infernal money done to you!"

Afterward Mr. Woods sank down upon the bench, and buried his face in his hands. He sat there for some while. He was not thinking of anything especially. His mind was a turbid chaos of misery; and about him, the birds shrilled and quavered and carolled till the air was vibrant with their trilling. One might have thought they choired in honor of the Eagle's triumph, and in mockery of Mr. Woods.

Then Mr. Woods raised his head, with a queer, alert look. Surely, he had heard a voice; and it was the dearest (even now the dearest) of all voices.

"Billy!" it wailed; "oh, Billy, Billy!"

Mr. Flinks from the Machine

FAITHFULLY to narrate how Cock-eye Flinks chanced to be at Selwoode were a task of magnitude. That gentleman travelled very quietly; and as a rule, he journeyed incognito under a variety of aliases suggested partly by a fertile imagination and in part by prudential reflections. For his notion of proprietary rights was vague, and his acquaintance with the police, in consequence, extensive. And finally, that he was now at Selwoode had come about not in the least by his own choice, but was all the doing of that crazy red-haired young Deal. . . .

Here is, however, no need to wander into extraneous mysteries. Inexplicable things happen now and then to everybody. So it suffices here to state that Mr. Flinks had on the preceding evening shared in a queer and, toward the end, injurious interview, of which the details are to our purpose irrelevant; and that the conduct of the other participant in this encounter was yet puzzling Mr. Flinks.

A loony, Mr. Flinks upon wholly logical grounds adjudged him: still, if there by any chance was even half the money in it that this here Orven Deal had talked about, you hadn't ought to let a good thing like that get by you. You'd better just wait sort of quiet and see.

So Mr. Flinks sat leaning against a tree in the gardens of Selwoode, some thirty feet from the wall which stands between Selwoode and Gridlington; and nursed the hurts to his pride and his foot, since both of these had been injured during last evening's encounter with that loony Deal fellow; and with a jack-knife rounded off the top of a substantial staff which was designed to alleviate the present lameness of Mr. Flinks. Meanwhile, he tempered his solitude with music, whistling melodiously the air of a song that pertained to the sacredness of home and of a white-haired mother.

Subsequently to Mr. Flinks entered a vision in violet ruffles.

Wide-eyed, she came upon him as Margaret trudged steadily onward, in that despairing misery peculiar to the young. And he startled her a bit. Indeed, it must be admitted that Cock-eye Flinks, while a man of large talent in his particular line of business, was, like many of your great geniuses, in outward aspect not wholly prepossessing.

"What are you doing here?" said Margaret,

sharply. "Don't you know this is private property?"

To his feet rose Cock-eye Flinks. "Lady," said he, with humbleness, "you wouldn't be hard on a poor workingman, would you? It ain't my fault I'm here, ma'am,—at least, it ain't rightly my fault. I just climbed over the wall to rest a minute,—just a minute, lady, in the shade of these beautiful trees. I ain't a-hurting nobody by that, I hope."

"Well, you had no business to do it," Miss Hugonin pointed out, "and you can just climb right back." Then she regarded him more intently, and her face somewhat softened. "What's the matter with your foot?"

"Brakesman," said Mr. Flinks, imaginatively. "Threw me off a train. He struck me cruel hard, he did, and me a poor workingman trying to make my way to Lichfield, lady, where my poor old mother's dying, lady, and me out of a job. Ah, but this is a tough world,—with me her only son,—and he struck me cruel, cruel hard, he did, but I forgive him for it, I do. And you are so beautiful I know you've got a kind, good heart, ma'am. Can't you do something for a poor workingman, lady, with a poor dying mother,—and a poor, sick wife," Mr. Flinks added as a dolorous afterthought; and drew nearer to her and held out one hand appealingly.

Petheridge Jukesbury had at divers times pointed out to her the dangers of promiscuous charity; and these dicta Margaret parroted glibly enough, to do her justice, so long as there was no immediate question of dispensing alms. But the next whining beggar that came her way would move her to give as recklessly as though there were no such things in existence as soup-kitchens and organised charities and common-sense. "Because, you know," she would afterward salve her conscience, "I couldn't be sure he didn't need it, whereas I was quite sure I didn't."

Now she wavered for a moment. "You didn't say you had a wife before."

"An invalid," sighed Mr. Flinks,— "a helpless invalid. Has fit after fit, with doctors no more good than water. And six babies, probably crying for bread at this very moment. Ah, lady, think what my feelings must be to hear 'em cry in vain,— think what I must suffer to know that I summoned them cherubs out of Heaven into this here hard, hard world, ma'am, and now can't do by 'em properly!" And Cock-eye Flinks brushed away a tear which one is privileged to regard as a particularly ambitious flight of Flinksian imagination.

Promptly Margaret opened the bag at her waist, and took out her purse. "Don't!" she pleaded. "Please don't! I'm upset already. Take this, and

please—oh, please, don't spend it in getting drunk or gambling or anything horrid," Miss Hugonin implored him. "You all do, and it's so selfish of you, and so discouraging."

Mr. Flinks eyed the purse hungrily. Such a fat purse! thought Cock-eye Flinks. Why, there's the money that red-haired loony was talking about. And there ain't nobody within a mile of here, either.

"Lady," said Mr. Flinks, twisting in his gnarled hand the bill she had given him,—and there, too, the Eagle flaunted in his vigor, and heartened Mr. Flinks,—“lady, that ain't much for you to give. Can't you do a little better than that by a poor workingman?”

A very unpleasant-looking person was Cock-eye Flinks. He was a peculiarly unpleasant-looking person to be a model son and a loving husband and a tender father. Margaret was aware of vague alarm.

But she was brave, was Margaret. “No,” said she, very decidedly, “I shan't give you another cent. So you climb right over that wall and go straight back where you belong.”

“Cheese it!” said Mr. Flinks, and flung away his staff and drew quite near to her. “Gimme that pocketbook, do you hear!”

“Don't you dare touch me!” she panted; “ah, don't you *dare*!”

"Aw, hell!" said Mr. Flinks, disgustedly; and his dirty hands were upon her, and his foul breath reeked in her face.

"Billy!" she wailed; "oh, Billy, *Billy!*"

And Billy Woods came to her,—just as the infatuated young man would have scaled heaven to come to her, just as he would have come to her in the nethermost pit of the most pyrotechnic Gehenna if she had called him to either. Billy Woods came to her in her peril, and Mr. Flinks did not particularly relish the look upon Billy's face as Billy ran through the gardens, for Billy was furiously moved.

Cock-eye Flinks glanced back at the wall behind him. Ten feet high, and the fellow ain't far off. Cock-eye Flinks caught up his staff, and as Billy closed upon him, Mr. Flinks struck his assailant full on the head. Again and again Mr. Flinks struck. It was a sickening business.

Billy had stopped short. For an instant he stood swaying on his feet, a puzzled face showing under the trickling blood. Then he flung out his hands a little, and they flapped loosely at the wrists, like wet clothes hung in the wind to dry, and Billy seemed to crumple up suddenly, and he slid down upon the grass, in an untidy heap.

"Ah-h-h!" said Mr. Flinks. He drew back and

stared stupidly at that sprawling flesh which just now had been a man, and he was seized with uncontrollable shuddering. "Ah-h-h!" said Mr. Flinks, very quietly.

And Margaret went mad. The earth and the sky dissolved in many floating specks and then turned red,—red like that heap yonder. The veneer of civilisation peeled, fell from her like snow from a shaken garment. . . . But this change is not endearing, and upon it there is no need to dwell. For most men in their time have glimpsed and been appalled by the unreasoning beast that lurks in every woman, and is so startlingly unleashed by pain or anger: and all men prefer to ignore it. . . .

"Damn you! Damn you!" she screamed. Her voice was high, flat, and not quite human. She cried again, "Ah, God in heaven damn you!" Then with inarticulate screaming she fell upon the man who had killed Billy Woods; and her violet fripperies fluttered, her impotent little hands beat and tore at the man who had killed Billy Woods. She was fearless. She only knew that Billy was dead.

With his face well down, so that this regular young hell-cat could not get at his eyes, Mr. Flinks was doggedly intent on opening the silver mesh-bag at Margaret's waist. Them papers wasn't his affair. But once he had that fine fat purse with the

yellow notes inside of it, he pushed the little devil from him, and he went away rather hastily. He needed that money pretty bad, but, as Mr. Flinks reflected with a growing sense of injury, if ever that red-haired loony had told him this was the way he had to get it! . . .

So he departed in aggrieved disgust. And Margaret fell to coaxing the heap in the grass to tell her that he forgave her,—to open his eyes,—to stop bloodying her dress,—to come to luncheon. . . .

A fly settled on Billy's face and came zigzag to the red stream trickling from Billy's nostrils, and stopped short. She brushed the carrion thing away, but it returned drunkenly. She touched it with her finger, and the fly would not move. It seemed to her that every nerve in her body had begun to jerk and shake like small flags snapping in a wind.

SOME ten minutes afterward, as the members of the house-party sat chatting on the terrace before Selwoode, came among them a mad woman in violet trappings which were splotted with blood.

"Did you know that Billy was dead?" she queried, smilingly. "Oh, yes, a man killed Billy just now. Wasn't it too bad? Billy was such a nice boy, you know. I think it's very sad. I think it is the saddest thing I ever knew of in my life."

Kathleen Saumarez was the first to reach her. But Margaret drew back.

"No, ah, no!" said Margaret, with a little shudder. "You didn't love Billy. He loved you, and you didn't love him. Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen, how could you help loving Billy? He was such a nice boy. I am rather sorry he's dead."

Then she stood silent, picking at her dress thoughtfully and still smiling. Afterward, for the

first and only time in history, Miss Hugonin fainted.

But Billy was not dead. There was yet a feeble, jerky fluttering in his big chest when Colonel Hugonin found him. His heart yet moved, but under the Colonel's hand its stirrings seemed as vague and aimless as the struggling of a captive butterfly.

The Colonel had seen dead men and dying men before this; and as he looked up from the recumbent young person who had that day ousted him from his comfortable quarters at Selwoode, the Colonel gave vent to a noise peculiarly like a sob.

Then—of all unlikely persons in the world,—arose to meet the occasion Petheridge Jukesbury.

His suavity and blandness forgotten in the presence of death, he mounted with confident alacrity to heights of greatness. Masterfully, he overrode them all. He poured brandy between Billy's teeth. Then he ordered the ladies off to bed, and recommended to Mr. Kennaston—when that gentleman spoke of a clergyman,—a far more cheerless destination.

For, "It is far from my intention," said Mr. Jukesbury, "to appear lacking in respect to the cloth, but—er—just at present I am inclined to think we are in somewhat greater need of a mat-

tress and a doctor and—ah—the exercise of a little common-sense. The gentleman is—er—let us hope, in no immediate danger—”

“Well, anyhow,” said Kennaston, “if I were in his fragments I would prefer to gamble on a clergyman—”

“Your jesting is abominably ill-timed, sir!”

“As if I didn’t know it, Jukesbury! But this sort of thing upsets me so that I have to be flippant to keep from crying. I never did like death, I simply never could get any real enjoyment out of it.”

“How dare you talk about dying, sir? Didn’t you see that poor girl’s face? I tell you I’ll be damned if he dies, sir!”

And as Felix Kennaston suggested, to Kathleen Saumarez, quite probably the recording angel did hear Mr. Jukesbury, and against a list of wordy cheats enregister that round oath to his credit.

It was Petheridge Jukesbury, then, who entered Mrs. Haggage’s apartments and invaded her bed and appropriated her mattress, and afterward waddled through the gardens bearing it on his back, and still later lifted Billy with incredible gentleness. . . . But it was the hatless Colonel, on his favorite Black Bess—“I do not hold with these tricky motor-cars!” the Colonel was wont to say: “I consider my appearance sufficiently unprepossessing already, sir,

without my arriving in heaven in several pieces, stinking of gasoline!"—it was Colonel Hugonin who, in Fairhaven town, a half-hour afterward, leaped Dr. Jeal's garden fence, and subsequently bundled the doctor into his gig.

YET later it was Colonel Hugonin who stood fuming upon the terrace, with Dr. Jeal on his way to Selwoode indeed, but still some four miles from the mansion toward which he was urging his staid horse at its liveliest gait.

Kennaston tried to soothe. But the Colonel clamored to the heavens. Kennaston he described without flattery. And as for Dr. Jeal, the Colonel meant to hold him responsible,—“personally, sir,”—for the consequences of dawdling in this fashion,—“damme, sir, like a damn snail with a wooden leg!”

“I am afraid,” said Kennaston, gravely, “that the doctor will be of very little use when he does arrive. That seems of course to be a generally human trait; but even so—”

There was that in his face which made the Colonel pause in high objurgations.

“Sir,” said the Colonel, “what—do—you—mean?” He found articulation somewhat difficult.

"In your absence," Kennaston answered, "Mr. Jukesbury, who, it appears, knows something of medicine, has subjected Mr. Woods to an examination. It must be very nice to possess such practical accomplishments. I wouldn't be at all surprised if old Jukesbury knew what makes talking go over a telephone wire, and what is the appropriate thing to say to a baby, and what the undertaker really does to you, and in fact—"

"Come to the point, sir," the Colonel interrupted. "What—do you—mean?"

"I mean," said Felix Kennaston, sadly, "that—he is afraid,—Mr. Woods will never regain consciousness. I had a feeling, you know, from the first, that my suggestion about having in a clergyman was the really sensible plan. There is something quite respectable about a clergyman, and at worst they never do any actual harm except at weddings. Really, I don't mind clergymen at all unless they play at being broad-minded and jovial, and I know of two or three things you can talk to them about—"

Colonel Hugonin stared at him. The skin of the Colonel's flabby, wrinkled old throat was working convulsively.

"You're wrong, sir," the Colonel said. "Quite apart from being a callous and chattering and generally offensive insect, you are also an idiot. Damn

Jukesbury! Damn all doctors, too, sir! I keep my trust in my God, sir, and not in a box of sugar-pills, sir. And I tell you that boy is not going to die."

Afterward he turned, and went into Selwoode. And in the living-hall the Colonel found Margaret, white as paper, with queer purple lips that timidly smiled at him.

"Why ain't you in bed?" the old gentleman demanded, with as great an affectation of sternness as he could muster. To say the truth, it was not much: for Colonel Hugonin, despite his blustering optimism, was sadly shaken.

"Attractive," said Margaret, "I couldn't stay in bed. My brain won't stop working, you see. There's a thin little whisper in the back of it that keeps telling me about Billy, and what a liar he is, and what nice eyes he has, and how poor Billy is dying. It keeps telling me that, attractive, over and over again. It is such a tiresome silly whisper. But he is dead, isn't he? Didn't Mr. Kennaston tell me just now that Billy was dead?—or was it the whisper?"

The Colonel coughed. "Kennaston—er—Kennaston's a fool," he declared helplessly. "Always said he was a fool. All nerves. Chattering and jumping about yonder, like an ape with too many fleas. We shall have Jeal in directly."

"No,—I remember now,—Mr. Kennaston said Billy would die very soon. You don't like people to disagree with you, do you, attractive? Of course, he will die, for the man hit him very hard. I saw him do it, you know. And I couldn't stop him! And now I am sorry Billy is going to die, even though he is such a liar!"

"Don't!" said the Colonel, hoarsely; "don't, daughter! I don't know what there is between you and Billy, but you are wrong. Oh, you are hopelessly wrong! Billy is the finest boy I know."

Margaret shook her head in dissent.

"No, he is a poor contemptible liar," she said, disinterestedly, "and that is what makes it so queer that I should care for him more than I do for anything else in the world. Yes, it's really very queer."

Then Margaret went into the room opening into the living-hall, where Billy Woods lay unconscious, and pallid, and breathing with horrible choked snores. And the Colonel stared after her.

"Oh, my God, my God!" groaned the Colonel; "why couldn't it have been I? Why couldn't it have been I that ain't wanted any longer? She'd never have grieved like that for me!"

The Ghost of a Voice

SHE sat silent in one corner of the darkened room. It was the bedroom that Frederick R. Woods had formerly occupied,—on the ground floor of Selwoode, opening into the living-hall,—to which they had carried Billy.

Jukesbury had done what he could. In the bed lay Billy Woods, swathed in hot blankets, with bottles of hot water set to his feet. Jukesbury had washed the face of Billy Woods clean of that awful red, and had wrapped bandages of cracked ice about his head and propped it high with pillows. Jukesbury had done other things that were necessary. . . . It was no whit short of marvellous to see the pursy old hypocrite going cat-footed about the room on his stealthy ministrations, replenishing the bandages, forcing spirits of ammonia between Billy's teeth, fighting deftly and confidently with death.

Billy still breathed. His mouth had fallen open now. Jukesbury attended to that too.

The Colonel came and went uneasily. The clock on the mantel ticked. Margaret waited in a silence which was only accentuated by that horrible wheezing, gurgling, shuddering noise in the bed yonder.

She was conscious of her absolute lack of emotion. She noted, with mild curiosity, that the insides of her hands were perspiring to an incredible extent.

"And when that noise stops he will be dead. And then, perhaps, I shall be able to cry. Oh, if he had only died four years ago!"

Billy looked so old now, under his many bandages. She reflected that now he must be very near death. She would not ever again see him walking anywhere outdoors as if the entire habitable globe belonged to him.

Suddenly, while Jukesbury was wrapping new bandages about Billy's forehead, Billy opened his eyes, and blew the wad of absorbent cotton from his mouth, and without moving at all, smiled placidly at Petheridge Jukesbury.

"Hello, Aphrodite," said Billy Woods. "Where is my armor?"

Jukesbury, too, smiled. "The man is bringing it downstairs now," he answered, quietly.

And Billy seemed somewhat relieved.

"Because, I don't propose to miss the Trojan war. The princes orgulous with high blood chafed,

you know, are all going to be there, and I don't propose to miss it."

Behind his fat back, Petheridge Jukesbury waved a cautioning hand at Margaret, who had risen from her chair.

"But it is very absurd," Billy murmured, in the mere ghost of a voice, "because men don't propose by mistake except in farces. Somebody told me that, but I can't remember who, because I am a misogynist. That is a Greek word, and I would explain it to Peggy, if she would only give me a chance, but she can't because she has those seventeen hundred and fifty thousand children to look after. There must be some way to explain to her, though, because where there's a will there is always a way, and there were three wills. Uncle Fred should not have left so many wills,—who would have thought the old man had so much ink in him? But I will be a very great painter, Uncle Fred, and make her sorry for the way she has treated me, and *then* Kathleen will understand I was talking about Peggy."

His voice died away, and Margaret sat listening for it to speak again. With her handkerchief she was once more wiping dry the palms of her hands.

Billy was smiling, and fumbling at the sheets.

"But Peggy is so rich," the faint voice presently complained—"so beastly rich! There is gold in

her hair, and if you look very closely you will see that her lashes were pure gold until she dipped them in the ink-pot. Besides, she expects me to sit up and beg for lumps of sugar, and I never take sugar in my coffee. And Peggy doesn't drink coffee at all, so I think it is very unfair, especially as Teddy Musgrave drinks like a fish, and she is going to marry him. Peggy, why won't you marry me? You know I have always loved you, Peggy, and now I can tell you so, because Uncle Fred has left me all his money. You think a great deal about money. You said it was the greatest thing in the world. And it must be, because it is the only thing—the only thing anywhere, Peggy,—that has been strong enough to keep us apart. A part is never greater than the whole, Peggy, but I will explain about that when you open that desk. There are sharks in it. Aren't there, Peggy?—aren't there?"

His voice had risen to a querulous tone. Gently the fat old man restrained him.

"Yes," said Petheridge Jukesbury; "dear me, yes, any number of them. Why, dear me, of course."

But his warning hand held Margaret back,—Margaret, who stood with big tears trickling down and outward on her cheeks. —

"Dearer than life itself," Billy assented, wearily, "but, for one, I wouldn't marry you now if you had all the wealth in the world. I forget why, but all the world is a stage, you know, and they don't use stages now, but only railroads. Is that why you rail at me so, Peggy? That is a joke. You ought to laugh at my jokes, because I love you, but I can't ever, ever tell you so, because you are too rich a woman to have any thought of me, and I am needless to you— Only, it is the rich man who cannot pass through a needle's eye. I don't know about women: and probably nobody does. Anyhow, I know about your eyes, and I love them, but they are too big, Peggy, and there is never any kindness in them. . . ."

So Billy Woods lay still and babbled ceaselessly. But through all his irrelevant talking, as you may see a tributary stream pulse unsullied in a muddied river, ran the thought of Peggy,—of Peggy, and of her cruelty, and of her beauty, and of the money that stood between them. Of no other feminine acquaintance did he speak one word: for indeed to Billy Woods all other women had become entirely unimportant persons, as much as twenty-four hours earlier.

And Margaret, who could never have believed him in his senses, listened and knew that in his

delirium, with the rudder of his thinking snapped, he could not but speak the truth. As she crouched in the corner of the room, her face buried in an armchair, her thick hair half loosened, and her shoulders monotonously heaving, she wept now, gently, inaudibly, and almost happily.

Almost happily, she assured herself. Billy was dying, but she knew now, past any doubt, of her right to grieve for his dying. Life was cruel, but not wholly ignoble; for she could love Billy now without shame, and there was only herself to be loathed.

Then the door opened. Then, with Colonel Hugonin, came Martin Jeal—a wisp of a man like a November leaf,—and regarded them, from under shaggy white hair, with alert eyes.

“Hey, what’s this?” said Dr. Jeal. “Eh, yes! Eh,—yes!” he meditated, slowly. “Most irregular. You must let us have the room, Miss Hugonin.”

In the hall she waited. Of course, there was no hope! the thin little whisper told her.

By and by, though—after centuries of waiting,—the three men came into the hall.

“Miss Hugonin,” said Dr. Jeal, with an almost wistful kindness in his voice, “I don’t think we shall need you again. I am happy to tell you,

though, that the patient is doing nicely,—very nicely indeed."

Margaret clutched his arm. "You—but do you really mean—?"

"I mean," said Dr. Jeal, "that there is no fracture. A slight concussion of the brain, madam, and—so far as I can see,—no signs of inflammation. Barring accidents, I think we will have that young man out of bed in a week. Thanks," he added, "to Mr.—er—Jukesbury here, whose prompt action was, under Heaven, undoubtedly the means of staving off meningitis and probably—indeed, more than probably,—the means of saving Mr. Woods' life. It was splendid, sir, splendid! No doctor— Why, God bless my soul!"

For Miss Hugonin had thrown her arms about Petheridge Jukesbury, and had kissed him.

"You beautiful child!" said Miss Hugonin, "if ever I spoke harshly to you it was only in a clumsy effort to conceal my adoration."

"Er—Jukesbury," said the Colonel, mysteriously, "so soon as you can tear yourself away from my daughter's unmaidenly advances, there is a little cognac in the cellar that—er—" The Colonel jerked his thumb so as to point across the hallway with the air of a conspirator. "Eh?" said the Colonel.

"Why—er—yes," said Mr. Jukesbury. "Why—

ah—after the day's excitement, I think I might, medicinally.”

They went across the hall together. The Colonel's hand rested fraternally upon Petheridge Jukesbury's shoulder.

27.

The Chapter Called Exodus

THE next day there was a general exodus from Selwoode, and Margaret's satellites dispersed upon their various ways. Selwoode, as they understood it, was no longer hers: and they knew Billy Woods well enough to recognise that from Selwoode's new master were to be had no desirable pickings such as the philanthropic crew had fattened on these four years past. So now came to them, one and all, urgent telegrams or insistent letters or some other such equally unanswerable demands for their presence elsewhere as are usually prevalent among guests in troublous or peculiarly dull times.

Miss Hugonin smiled a little bitterly. She considered that the scales had fallen from her eyes, and flattered herself that she was by way of becoming a bit of a misanthrope; also there was a commentary concerning the hollowness of life and the worthlessness of society in general. In a word, Margaret fell back upon the extreme cynicism and world-weariness of twenty-three, and assured her-

self that she detested everybody, whereas, as a mere fact, she had never in her life succeeded in detesting anything except mice and piano-practice, and, for a very little while, Billy Woods.

But, "The rats always desert a sinking ship," said Miss Hugonin, with the air of one delivering a particularly original sentiment. "They make me awfully tired, and I don't care for them in the least. Anyhow, Petheridge Jukesbury is a dear, and I may be poor now, but I did try to do good with the money when I had it, and anyhow, Billy is going to get well."

And, after all, that was the one thing which really mattered, though of course Billy would always despise her, unless through tactful means somebody persuaded him of how abominably he had behaved, and forgave him. It seemed quite probable that somebody might: if not, there were always nunneries. . . .

But the conventionalities of life are more powerful than youthful cynicism and youthful heart-break. Prior to devoting herself irrevocably to a loveless life and the commonplaces of the stoic's tub, Miss Hugonin was compelled by decency to bid her guests Godspeed.

And Adèle Haggage kissed her for the first time. Adèle had been a little awed by Miss Hugonin, the heiress,—a little jealous of her, perhaps, on account

of Hugh Van Orden,—but now Adèle kissed Margaret **very** heartily in farewell, and said, “Don’t forget you are to come to us as soon as possible,” and was beyond any question entirely sincere in saying it.

And Hugh Van Orden almost dragged Margaret under the main stairway, and, far from showing any marked abhorrence to her in her present state of destitution, implored her, with tears in his eyes, to marry him at once, and to bring the Colonel to live with them for the rest of everybody’s natural existence.

“For while it’s most impertinent of me, of course,” Mr. Van Orden readily conceded, “and I suppose I ought to beg your pardon for mentioning it, still I do love you to a perfectly unlimited extent. It is playing the very deuce with my polo, Miss Hugonin, and as for my appetite— Why, if you won’t have me,” cried Hugh, in desperation, “I—really, you know, I don’t believe I shall ever again be able to eat anything!”

When Margaret refused him—for the sixth time,—there is no swearing that she did not kiss him, under the dark stairway. And if she did, he was a nice boy, and he deserved it, declared Margaret, when commenting afterward upon the very idea of her having so much as thought of such a thing.

And as for Sarah Ellen Haggage, she brought

a blank cheque signed with her name, and mentioned a quite goodly sum as the extent to which Margaret might go for necessary expenses.

"For you'll need it," Mrs. Haggage said, and rubbed her nose reflectively. "Moving is the very deuce for wasting money, because so many little things keep cropping up. Now, remember, a quarter is quite enough to give any man for moving a trunk. And there's no earthly sense in your taking a cab, Margaret,—the horse-car will bring you within a block of our door. These little trifles count, dear. And don't let Célestine pack your things, because she's abominably careless. Let Marie do it,—and don't tip her. Give her an old hat. And if I were you, I would certainly consult a lawyer about the legality of that idiotic will. I distinctly remember hearing that Mr. Woods was very eccentric in his last days, and I haven't a doubt he was raving mad when he left all his money to a great, strapping, long-legged young fellow, who is perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Getting better, is he? Well, I suppose I am glad to hear it, but he had much better have stayed in Paris,—where, I distinctly remember hearing, he led the most dissipated and immoral life, my dear,—instead of coming over here and upsetting everything."

And Mrs. Haggage rubbed her nose indignantly.

"He didn't!" said Margaret. "And I can't take your money, darling. And I don't see how we can possibly come to stay with you."

"Don't you argue with me!" Mrs. Haggage exhorted. "I am not in any temper to be argued with. I have just had a letter from that husband of mine, about all his trouble with his last wife—and of course the bank."

"But, Mother Haggage, if you are helping him out again—!" Margaret also had aforesaid contributed to the forlorn cause of Mrs. Haggage's ex-husband.

"Well, but," said Mrs. Haggage, broad-mindedly, "it isn't for much this time. And it is just that Alfred is worried into frenzies by the extravagance of those women, and starts drinking. I do wish he could find an inexpensive one. For the moment one drink is in him he seems to forget that if you put the wrong name on a cheque you usually get into trouble. But then, Alfred has always been like that: and it isn't as if sending him to jail would teach him any better sense. And as a young man, my dear, he really was the handsomest creature you ever saw. . . . Still, he is a distinctly upsetting nuisance, and, as I was saying, his letters put me in no frame of mind to be argued with. So you take that money, and you come to me as soon as you leave here, and—God bless you, my dear!"

And again Miss Hugonin was kissed. Altogether it was an osculatory morning.

Mr. Jukesbury's adieux, however, were more formal: and the old fellow went away wondering if the rich Mr. Woods might not conceivably be very grateful to the man who had, practically, saved the life of Mr. Woods, and might not evince that gratitude in some agreeable and substantial form.

Mrs. Saumarez and Mr. Kennaston, also, were in their leave-taking more decorous than emotional. Kennaston could not feel quite at ease with Margaret, no matter what attempts he made in the way of devil-may-carish flippancy: and Kathleen had, by this time, an inkling as to how affairs stood between Margaret and Billy, and was somewhat puzzled, and loved Margaret no more than any Christian female is compelled to love the larcenist who, whether unconsciously or with deliberation, purloins her quondam lover. A woman, they say, may conceivably forgive the man who has ceased to care about her amorously: but history records no case wherein the amnesty included the successor to his affections.

And besides, Mrs. Saumarez and Kennaston were utterly engrossed with each other, and utterly selfish with the immemorial selfishness of the "engaged," who cannot for a moment conceive that the whole world is not somehow benefited by their hap-

piness and does not await with breath-bated concern the outcome of their contract with the blind bow-god; and from this providential delusion derive a pleasurable feeling of merit and philanthropy. So Mrs. Saumarez and Mr. Kennaston parted from Margaret with kindness, it is true, but not without a tincture of embarrassment.

And that was the man whom almost she had loved! thought Margaret, as she gazed on the whirl of dust left by the carriage wheels. Gone, with a few perfunctory words of sympathy! . . .

"But then, I never cared about him,—not really," she assured herself: and in the comfortable way of women promptly began to believe what she preferred to believe. . . .

The Colonel, standing beside her, used language that was unrefined. His aspirations as to the future of Mr. Kennaston and Mr. Jukesbury, it appeared, were both lurid and unfriendly.

"But why, attractive?" queried Margaret.

"May they encounter such and such undesirable fates!" desired the Colonel, fervently. "They tried to lend me money,—Jukesbury actually had it, and Kennaston thought he knew where he could get it—'In case of necessity!' Bah!" said the Colonel, and shook his fist after the retreating carriages. "May this and that be their calamitous fortunes!"

But Margaret laughed happily. "And you're

swearing at them!" she marvelled. "Oh, my dear, my dear, how hard you are on all my little friends!"

"Of course I am," said the Colonel, stoutly. "They've deprived me of the pleasure of despising 'em. It was worth double the money, I tell you! I never objected to any two men quite so much. And now they've gone and behaved decently with the deliberate purpose of annoying me!"

"It isn't altogether that, attractive. It's just that they are pretty much like everybody else. It's just that most of us do, really, prefer to be as kind and generous as common-sense permits, in a world where the first of every month finds the butcher and the baker and the candlestick-maker all rapping at the door, all with their little bills. . . ."

"To me, now, daughter, that sounds mighty literary. I believe you are still quoting that fellow Kennaston."

"Well, but it is for the last time, attractive," said Margaret, half-ruefully.

Some More Confounded Nonsense

DR. JEAL, better than his word, had Billy Woods out of bed in five days. To Billy they were very long and very dreary days, and to Margaret very long and penitential ones. But Colonel Hugonin enjoyed them thoroughly; for, as he feelingly and frequently observed, it is an immense consolation to any man to reflect that his home no longer contains more damn foolishness to the square inch than any other house in the States.

On all sides they sought for Cock-eye Flinks. But they never found him, and to this day they have never found him. The Author of our comedies, having played his pawn, appeared forthwith to have removed it from the board.

All this time the young people saw nothing of each other. On this point Jeal was adamantean.

"In a sick-room," he vehemently declared, "a woman is well enough, but *the* woman is the devil and all. I've told that young man plainly, sir, that he doesn't see your daughter till he gets well,—and

now, by George, sir, he will get well just in order to see her. Nature is the only doctor who ever cures anybody, Colonel: we humans, for all our pill-boxes and lancets and honorary degrees, can only prompt her. And sometimes she listens: and sometimes not. . . .”

“Peggy—!”

This was the first observation of Mr. Woods when he regained the purlieu of common-sense. He swore feebly when Peggy was denied to him. He pleaded. He argued. He scolded. He even threatened, as a last resort, to get out of bed and go in immediate search of her: and in return, Jeal told him very affably that it was no trouble at all to manage a patient in a strait-jacket, and that nothing would more thoroughly ease the mind of the physician in charge of this case than a plausible pretext for clapping Mr. Woods into one of them. In dealing with the fractious, Jeal had his own methods.

Then Billy clamored for Colonel Hugonin, and subsequently the Colonel came to his daughter's rooms in some bewilderment.

“Billy says that will ain't to be probated,” he informed her, testily. “I am to make sure it ain't probated till he gets well. You are to give me your word you will do nothing further in the matter till

Billy gets well. That's his message, and I'd like to know what the devil this confounded nonsense means. I ain't a Fenian nor yet a Guy Fawkes, daughter, and in consequence I'm free to confess I don't care for all this mystery and shilly-shallying. But that's the message."

Miss Hugonin debated with herself. "That I will do nothing further in the matter till Billy gets well," she repeated, reflectively. "Yes, I suppose I'll have to promise it, but you can tell him from me that I consider he is horrid, and just as obstinate and selfish as he can possibly be. Can you remember that, attractive?"

"Yes, thank you," said the Colonel. "I can remember it, but I ain't going to. Nice sort of message to send a sick man, that is! I don't know what's got into you, Margaret,—no, begad, I don't! I think you're possessed of seventeen devils. And now," the old gentleman demanded, after a tentative pause, "are you or are you not going to tell me what all this dark-lantern and skull and cross-bones business is about?"

"I can't," Miss Hugonin protested. "It—it's a secret, attractive."

"It ain't," said the Colonel, flatly,—“it's some more confounded nonsense.” And he went away in a fret and using language that was fiery-colored and strange.

Soliloquy in a Kimono

LEFT to herself, Miss Hugonin meditated.

Miss Hugonin was in her kimono.

And if Madame Chrysanthème, or Madame Butterfly, or Mimosa San, or Pitti Sing, or Yum Yum, or any other of the vaunted beauties of Japan, could have seen her in that garb, one trembled to think of the heart-burnings and palpitations, and the wringings of henna-stained fingers, and the almond-shaped, slant eyes made permanently verdant with jealousy, that would have ensued, said Felix Kennaston. He exercised, no doubt, the poetic privilege of overstating matters. But there is no denying Miss Hugonin's kimono was becoming.

The kimono was pink,—the pink of her cheeks, to a shade. And scattered about it were birds and butterflies, and snaky, emaciated dragons, with backs like the cutting edge of a saw, and prodigious fangs, and claws, and very curly tails,—such dragons as breed in Nankeen plates and used to

ramp on packages of fire-crackers,—all done in gold that matched her hair. Moreover, one might catch a glimpse of her neck,—which was a manifest favor of the gods,—and about it mysterious, lacy white things intermingling with divers tiny blue ribbons.

And now, as she stood rigid with indignation, her cheeks flushed, it was a pleasant spectacle to note how the shell-pink of her cheeks repeated the pink of her fantastic garment like a chromatic echo; and how her sunny hair, a thought loosened, a shade dishevelled, clung heavily about her face, a shining snare for eye and heart; and how her own eyes, enormous and cerulean, became as wistful as the wide eyes of a child who has been punished and does not know exactly why; and how her petulant mouth quivered, and how the long black lashes, golden at the roots, quivered, also— Yes, even Margaret found this spectacle to be pleasant enough, through the aid of an obliging mirror.

"Now," she announced, "I see plainly what he intends doing. He is going to destroy that will, and burden me once more with a large and influential fortune. I don't want it, and I won't take it, and he might just as well understand that at the beginning. I don't care if Uncle Fred did leave it to me,—I didn't ask him to, did I? Besides, he was a very foolish old man,—if he had left the

money to Billy everything would have been all right. That's always the way, though,—my dolls are invariably stuffed with sawdust, and I never have a dear gazelle to glad me with his dappled hide, but when he comes to know me well, he falls upon the buttered side,—or words to that effect. I hate poetry, anyhow,—it's so mushy."

And with this from the Miss Hugonin who a week ago was interested in the French *décadents*, and partial to folk-songs from the Romaic—with this to go on, we may fairly deduce that the reign of Felix Kennaston is over. That king is dead, with the most thorough sort of defunction: and Margaret's thoughts and affections, and her very dreams, have fallen loyally to crying, Long live his Majesty, Billy the First.

"Oh!" said Margaret, with an indignant gasp, what time her eyebrows gesticulated, "I think Billy Woods is a meddlesome piece!—that's what I think. Does he suppose that after waiting all this time for the only man in the world who can keep me interested for four hours on a stretch and send my pulse up to a hundred and make me feel those thrilly thrills I've always longed for,—does he suppose that now I'm going to pay any attention to his fool notions about wills and things? He's abominably selfish; and I certainly shan't."

Margaret moved across the room, floating, and rustling, and shimmering, like a fairy in a pantomime. Then, to consider matters at ampler ease, she curled up on a divan in very much the attitude of a tiny Cleopatra riding at anchor on a carpeted Cydnus.

"Billy thinks I want the money,—bless his boots! He thinks I am a stuck-up, grasping, purse-proud little pig, and he has every right to think so after the way I talked to him, though he ought to have realised I was in a temper about Kathleen Saumarez and have paid no attention to what I said. And he actually attempted to reason with me! If he'd had any consideration for my feelings, he'd have simply smacked me and made me behave— Still, he's a man, and all men are selfish, and she's a skinny old thing, and I never had any use for her. Particularly not for her lectures, because I hardly understand a word of them, and I don't believe she does, either. Women's clubs are silly, and I think the women who belong to them are bold-faced jigs! If they had any sense, they'd stay at home and take care of the babies,—I mean of course a respectable baby, with presents and Lohengrin and everything quite regular,—instead of messing with philanthropy, and education, and suffrage and theosophy, and civic betterment, and anything else that they

can't make head or tail of. And they call that being cultured! Culture!—I hate the word! I don't want to be cultured,—I want to be happy."

This was, in effect, a sweeping recantation of every ideal which Margaret had ever boasted. But Love is a canny pedagogue, and of late he had instructed Miss Hugonin in a variety of matters over and above the conduct of tantrums.

"But, for one, I wouldn't marry you if you had all the wealth in the world! Even in his delirium he said that. But I know now that he loves me. And I know that I adore him. And if this were a sensible world, I'd walk right in there and explain things and tell him how we are going to be married in September, and then it wouldn't matter in the least who had the money. But I can't, because it wouldn't be proper. Bother propriety!—but bothering it doesn't do any good. As long as I have the money, Billy will never come near me, because of the idiotic way I talked to him. And he's bent on my taking the money simply because it happens to belong to me. I consider that a very silly reason. I'll make Billy Woods take the money, and I'll make him see that I'm not a little pig, and that I trust him implicitly and am going to have a chrysanthemum wedding. And I think I'm quite justified in using a little—we'll call it diplomacy,—because otherwise he'd go back to France or some

other objectionable place, and we'd both be very unhappy."

Margaret began to laugh softly. "I've given him my word that I'll do nothing further in the matter till he gets well. And I won't. *But—!*"

Miss Hugonin rose from the divan with a gesture of sweeping back her hair. And then the fat twisted coils tumbled loose and slowly unravelled themselves, and her pink-and-white face, half-eclipsed, showed as a delectable wedge between big, odorful, crinkly, floating masses of hair, which clung about her in the fashion of a cloak, shimmering like the path of sunset over the June sea. And Margaret, once more looking at herself in the obliging mirror, laughed, and appeared perfectly content with what she saw there.

"But," said she, "if the Fates are kind to me—and I sometimes think I *have* a pull with the gods,—I will make you happy, Billy Woods, in spite of yourself."

The obliging mirror flashed back a smile. Margaret was interested in that mirror.

"She has ringlets in her hair," sang Margaret happily,—a low, half-hushed little song. She held up a strand to substantiate her assertion.

"There's a dimple in her chin,"—and, indeed, there was. And a dimple in each cheek, too.

For a considerable time afterward Margaret con-

tinued to regard the mirror quite benevolently. One becomes afraid Kathleen Saumarez was right. She was a vain little cat, was Margaret.

But, barring a re-arrangement of the cosmic scheme, one suspects that maids will continue to delight in their own comeliness as long as mirrors speak truth. Besides, the staidest of us are conscious of a brisk elation at sight of a pretty face: and surely no considerate person will deny its owner a portion of the pleasure that daily she accords the beggar at the street-corner,

30.

How They Settled It

WE are credibly informed that Time travels in divers paces with divers persons,—the statement being made by a lady who may be considered to speak with authority, after having withstood the ravages of Chronos for a matter of three centuries. But it is doubtful if even the insolent sweet wit of Rosalind could have devised an exact simile for Time's gait at Selwoode those five days that Billy lay abed. Margaret could not but marvel at the flourishing proportion attained by the hours in those sunlit quiet spring days; and at dinner, say, her thoughts harking back to luncheon, would recall that meal almost as an affair of the remoter yester-years. Breakfast of course seemed faint and vague as a Druidical tenet or a Merovingian squabble. For that Jeal person really was the pokiest sort of doctor about getting people well.

But the time passed for all that; and eventually—just before dusk,—she came, with Martin Jeal's

permission, into the room where Billy was. And beside the big open fireplace, where a wood fire blustered companionably, sat a very pallid Billy, a rather thin Billy, with a great many bandages about his head.

You may depend upon it, Margaret was not looking her worst that afternoon. By actual count, Célestine had done Miss Hugonin's hair six times before reaching an acceptable result.

And: "Yes, Célestine, you may get out that pale yellow dress. No, beautiful, the one with the black satin stripes on the bodice,—because I don't want my hair cast completely in the shade, do I? . . . Now, let me see,—black feather, gloves, large pompadour, *and* a sweet smile. No, I don't want a fan,—that is a Lydia Languish trade-mark. And let's have two silk skirts, because I want to rustle like the deadest leaves imaginable. . . . Oh, but that will do,—you can just pin it, without wasting all day. And if you can't hook up my dress without pecking and pecking at me like that, I'll probably go stark, staring crazy, Célestine, and then you'll be sorry. . . . Well, you can just pin it. It isn't a bit tight. But are you perfectly certain there's no powder behind my ears? . . . Now please do try, just for once, to fasten that collar without pulling all my hair down. . . . Well, if there isn't, you can pin it, can't you, without talking

me deaf, dumb and blind? . . . Ye-es, I suppose that will have to do. And it's very nice of you to say so, but I don't believe I much fancy myself in yellow, after all."

Equipped and armed for conquest, then, Miss Hugonin came into the room with a quite plausible affectation of unconcern.

"I've been for a little drive, Billy," she mendaciously informed him. "That's how you happen to have the opportunity of seeing me in all my nice new store-clothes. Aren't you pleased, Billy? No, don't you dare get up!" Margaret stood across the room, peeling off the gloves she had just put on, and regarding him, upon the whole, with disapproval. "They've been starving you," she pensively reflected. "As soon as that Jeal person goes away, I shall have six little beefsteaks cooked and see to it personally that you eat every one of them. And I'll cook a cherry pie,—quick as a cat can wink her eye,—won't I, Billy? That Jeal person is a decided nuisance," said Miss Hugonin, as she stabbed her hat most viciously with two hat-pins, and then laid it aside on a table.

Billy Woods was looking up at her forlornly. And avidly his soul drank in the modulations of this longed-for voice,—the voice that, to his finding, was honey and gold and velvet and all which is most sweet and rich and soft in the world.

"Peggy," said he, plunging at the heart of things, "where is that will?"

Miss Hugonin kicked forward a foot-stool to the other side of the fire, and sat down and smoothed out long, flaring skirts which entirely hid her feet.

"I knew it!" said she. "I never saw such a one-idea'd person in my life. I knew that would be the very first thing you would ask for, Billy Woods, because you're such an obstinate, stiff-necked donkey. Oh, well!"—and Margaret tossed her head,—"here's Uncle Fred's will, then, and you can do exactly as you like with it, and now I hope you're satisfied!"

And Margaret handed him the long envelope which lay in her lap. Mr. Woods promptly opened this envelope.

"That," Miss Hugonin commented, "is what I term the height of unladylike behavior. You evidently don't trust me, Billy Woods. And as if I cared! So read it very carefully, and make sure I haven't been dabbling in forgery of late— Besides, it's so good for your eyes, you know, after being hit over the head."

Billy chuckled. "That's true," said he, "but I know Uncle Fred's fist well enough without having to read it all. Candidly, Peggy, I had to look at the paper, because I— Well, I didn't quite trust

you, Peggy. And now we are going to burn this interesting document, you and I."

"Wait!" Margaret cried. "Ah, wait, just a moment, Billy!"

He glanced up at her, in surprise, the paper still poised in his hand.

She sat with head drooped forward, with her masculine little chin thrust out eagerly, with her candid eyes appraising him.

"Why are you going to burn it, Billy?"

"Why?" Mr. Woods repeated, thoughtfully. "Well, for a variety of reasons. First is, that Uncle Fred really did leave his money to you, and burning this is the only way of making sure you get it. Why, but I thought you wanted to burn it! Last time I saw you, Peggy, you spoke quite—ah—feelingly about the advantages of being wealthy."

"I was in a temper," said Margaret, haughtily. "You ought to have seen that."

"Yes, I—er—noticed it," Mr. Woods admitted: "but it wasn't only temper. You have grown accustomed to the money. You would miss it now, —miss the pleasure it gives you, miss the power it gives you. You would never be content to go back to the old life now. Why, Peggy, you yourself told me you thought money the greatest thing in the world! It has changed you, Peggy, this— Ah,

well!" said Billy, "we won't talk about that. I'm going to burn it because that is the only honorable thing to do, and because one has—confound it!—to be a gentleman."

"It may be honorable, but it's extremely silly," Margaret temporised, "and for my part, I'm very glad God had run out of a sense of honor when He created the woman."

"Phrases, however brilliant and sententious, don't alter matters. Ready, Peggy?"

"Ah, no, phrases don't alter matters!" she assented, with a quickening of speech. "You want to destroy that will, Billy Woods, simply because you think I am a horrid, mercenary, selfish pig. You think I couldn't bear to give up the money,—you think I couldn't be happy without it. Well, you've every right to think so, after the way I've behaved. But why not tell me that is the real reason?"

Billy raised his hand in protest. "I think you might miss it," he conceded. "Yes, I think you would miss it."

"Listen!" said Margaret, quickly. "The money is yours now,—by my act. You say you—care for me. If I am the sort of girl you think me,—I don't say I am, and I don't say I am not, because, Heaven knows, I am at least not the sort of girl to thrust embarrassing confidences on anybody. So, as I

was saying, don't you think I'd marry you for the asking if you kept the money? Don't you think you are losing every chance of me by burning that will? Don't you really, at the bottom of your heart, think that?"

Margaret stayed motionless. She bent toward him, her lips parted a little, her eyes glinting in the firelight. The room was dark now save in the small radius of the charred logs' glow; beyond that was darkness where panels and brasses blinked.

"Yes," said Billy, gravely,—“forgive me if I am wrong, dear, but—I do think that. Only, you see, you don't care for me, Peggy. In the summer-house I thought for a moment— Ah, well, you have shown, in a hundred fashions, you don't care for me in that way. And I can't bear the thought of—well, buying you. And I can't for one single half-instant trust myself not to be trying to get you in any way I can. So, for both our sakes, I am going to burn the paper.”

Margaret bowed her head. It seemed to her she had not ever known happiness before.

“It is not flattering to me,” she said, “but it shows that you—care—a great deal. You care enough to—let me go. Ah,—yes! You may burn it now, Billy.”

And promptly he tossed the paper into the flames. For a moment it lay unharmed; then the edges

caught and crackled and blazed, and their heads drew near together as they watched it burn.

There (thought Billy) is the end! Ah, ropes, daggers, and poisons! there is the end. Oh, Peggy, Peggy, if only you could have loved me! if only this accursed money had not spoiled you so utterly! Billy was quite properly miserable over it.

But he raised his head with a smile. "And now," said he,—and not without a tinge of bitterness,—“if I have any right to advise you, Peggy, I—I think I would in the future be more careful as to how I used all this money. You have tried to help people with it, I know. But every fine cause has its parasites. Don't trust entirely to the Haggages and Jukesburys, Peggy, and—and don't desert the good ship Philanthropy because there are some barnacles on it.”

“You make me awfully tired,” Miss Hugonin observed, as she rose to her feet. “How do you suppose I'm going to do anything for philanthropy or any other of the nice little cardinal virtues when I haven't a penny in the world? You see, you've just burned the last will Uncle Fred ever made,—the one that left everything to me. The one in your favor was probated or proved or recorded, or whatever they call it, a week ago.”

Billy was surprised.

She stood over him, sharply outlined against

darkness, clasping her hands tightly just under her chin, not unsuggestive of a pre-Raphaelitish saint. In the firelight her hair was an aureole; and her gown, yellow with multitudinous tiny arabesques of black velvet, echoed to a shade the glow of her hair. The dancing flames made of her a flickering little yellow wraith.

"I told you I burned the other will. That wasn't really a lie, because I did start to burn it. But I was afraid to, because I didn't know what they could do to me if I did. So I put it away in my little handkerchief-box,—and if you'd had a grain of sense you'd have noticed the orris on it. And you made me promise not to take any steps in the matter till you got well. I knew you would. So I had already sent that second will—sent it before I promised you,—to Hunston Wyke. He's my lawyer now, you know. And I've heard from him. And he has had it admitted to debate, or probate,—or something. Anyhow, it doesn't matter what it was admitted to, because it got in there on Wednesday, and you can't do anything whatever about it now."

Billy was making irrelevant sounds.

"And I brought that other will to you, and if you didn't choose to examine it more carefully I'm sure it wasn't my fault. I kept my word like a perfect gentleman and took no steps whatever in the matter.

I didn't say a word when before my eyes you stripped me of my entire worldly possessions,—you know I didn't. You burned it up yourself, Billy Woods,—of your own free will and accord. And now Selwoode and all that detestable money belongs to you, and I'm sure I'd like to know what you are going to do about it. So there!"

Margaret faced him defiantly. Billy was in a state of considerable perturbation.

"Why have you done this?" he asked slowly. Yet a lucent something—which was half fear and still was, very wholly and unutterably, gladness also,—was awakening in Billy's eyes.

And her eyes answered him. But her tongue was less veracious.

"Because you thought I was a pig! Because you couldn't make allowances for a girl who for four years has seen nothing but money and money-worshippers and the power of money! Because I wanted your—your respect, Billy. And you thought I couldn't give it up! Very well!" Miss Hugonin waved her hand airily toward the hearth. "Now I hope you know better. . . . Don't you *dare* get up, Billy Woods!"

But nothing short of brute force could have kept Mr. Woods away from her.

"Peggy," he babbled,—“ah, forgive me if I'm a presumptuous ass,—but was it because you knew

I couldn't ask you to marry me so long as you had the money?"

She dallied with her bliss. Margaret had hastily removed to the other side of the table.

"Why—why, of course it wasn't!" she stated. "What nonsense!"

"Look at me, Peggy!"

"I don't want to! You look like a fright with your head all tied up."

"Peggy . . . this exercise is bad for an invalid."

"I—oh, please sit down! Now, Billy, you stop chasing me around tables, because it *is* bad for you—"

"Not until you tell me—"

"But I *don't!* . . . Oh, you make me awfully tired."

"Peggy, don't you dare stamp your foot at me! . . . Peggy!"

"*Please* sit down! Now . . . Well, there's my hand, stupid, if you *will* be silly. Now sit down here,—so, with your head leaned back on this nice little cushion because it's good for your poor head,—and I'll sit on this nice little footstool and be quite, quite honest. No, you must lean back,—I don't care if you can't see me, I'd much rather you couldn't. Well, the truth is—no, you *must* lean back,—the truth is I have never for one moment been able *not* to, not even when you were at your

hatefullest and swearing at me like troopers—Only, please don't argue up at the ceiling like that, because it is most impolite when a lady is talking, and—no, not *yet*, Billy,—and if you hadn't been the stupidest beautiful in the universe you'd have seen it long ago. You needn't—lean back—any longer, Billy. . . . Oh, Billy, why didn't you shave?"

"She *is* skinny, isn't she, Billy?"

"Now, Peggy, you mustn't abuse Kathleen. She's a friend of mine."

"Well, I know she's a friend of yours, but that doesn't prevent her being skinny, does it?"

"Now, Peggy—"

"Please, Billy! *Please* say she's skinny!"

"Er—well, she's a bit thin, perhaps."

"You angel!"

"—But really, Billy, you ought to control your temper more,—and not fly out at people so—"

"I'll be sure to do much better, with you to set me an example, dear."

"Well,—I hope so. And I'll try to forgive you for all the horrid things you said,—and for doubting me—"

"Bless you, Peggy, I never doubted you. I've been too busy loving you."

"It seems to me as if it had been—*always*."

"I know. . . . We loved each other in Carthage, Peggy."

"I think it was in Babylon, Billy."

"And we will love each other—?"

"Forever and ever, dear. You've been to seek a wife, Billy boy."

"And with what a dimple in her chin. . . . !"

Ah, well! There was a deal of prattle in the firelight,—of feeble-minded and, to the makers, delectable prattle, as irresponsible as the chattering of little birds after a storm. And I would like to assure you that the Eagle's shadow, and every other sort of shadow, is entirely and forevermore lifted from Selwoode, now that Love has taken up his abode there. But really, so many vexatious accidents occur even in the life of a couple whom love has brought together that sometimes the rapture of amorous dalliance does not keep wholly unimpaired and omnipotent for all of twenty years. . . .

Upon that, though, here is no need to dwell. So I put aside the knowledge that Billy Woods has now been dead for a great while; and that the last time I saw Margaret I did not at the first glance "place" this husky-voiced and middle-aged and—as we will delicately phrase it,—rather plump matron; and that, after leaving her, I wondered, some-

what forlornly, about certain long-past and wholly irrelevant inanities. It was not, I assure you, that there ever occurred between us anything of actual importance: at most, when Margaret and I were young, there were passages of the sort which later one's wife would view unsympathetically if ever any married man discussed them. But we do not: we merely remember.

I put aside, in fine, the knowledge that these two young people developed long ago into quite other persons; and that these persons played out their respectable rôles in life with a deal more of dignity and common-sense than you might ever deduce from the data of this small comedy. For youth passed, with all its nonsense: and they settled down to the gravity appropriate to being married, and having children, and serving on committees and boards of patronesses, and maintaining an undiscouraging bank-balance, and being attended a little more and more frequently by physicians, and to being assured, in the end, of a handsome and laudatory tombstone. And somehow it seems more important—even now,—that first there was that foolish prattle in the firelight. So there I elect to leave them.

AN APPENDIX: ABOUT MORALS

*"Daughter of chaos and eternal night,
Dulness o'er all possessed an ancient right;
And still that empire to restore she tries,
For, born a goddess, Dulness never dies."*

An Appendix: About Morals

[For the appendix has been reserved the confession that this comedy, also, was once upon moral grounds adjudged an indecent and shocking performance. The following contributions to literary criticism are cited, in full, from the files of *The New York Times Book Review*.]

NEW YORK TIMES, 26 NOVEMBER 1904

New York Times Book Review:

I have just finished a book which for its cleverness appears to me to stand head and shoulders above any novel of the year—Mr. James Branch Cabell's *The Eagle's Shadow*. But it contains an enormity so glaring that I am surprised any reputable publishing house should have countenanced it. I allude to the scene between Margaret Hugonin and the not very fortunately christened Cock-eye Flinks. Surely this is an abominable blot upon an otherwise delightful book. The heroine—gentlewoman in birth, breeding and surroundings, and deliciously described as endowed with all the qualities which make the modern woman of wealth and refinement delicious to eye and association—is presented to us as relapsing into the primal passions of the animal woman whose mate is stricken down before her eyes. She breaks into the most hideous profanity and even resorts to desperate physical attack upon the assailing ruffian. Now nobody can deny that a woman is an animal, and that in

emergency or stress of violent passion the limitations of her ordinary life are swept away, but it is doubtful if a woman trained and cultured according to the higher social standards would under any circumstances think of oaths familiar in Billingsgate Market or the lowest dens of iniquity. The matter-of-fact way in which this episode is introduced and passed over without comment either constitutes an insult to American womanhood or else marks a lamentable deterioration of our National standards. It may be that I am not abreast of the times, but in my day gentlewomen were not supposed to be conversant with profanity. They would not have used it, however emotionally roused, for the simple reason that they scarcely knew it existed. But here we have a woman whom Mr. Cabell evidently considers very nearly an ideal woman represented as resorting to oaths quite as a matter of course. I cannot believe that the American woman habitually swears. Heaven knows she has been accused of a sufficiency of sins, but a tendency to cigarette smoking, or even tippling, is but the mark of a degraded bodily appetite, whereas profanity is the mark of a degraded mind, an ineradicable evil. It may be that Mr. Cabell was merely striving for effect. If so, he has woefully overshoot the mark and marred, for me at least, the effect of a wonderfully dainty piece of writing. I believe that he is a very young man, which accounts for much, but even so, if he had devoted one-tenth of the care to this scene that he has evidently given to his descriptive passages he would never have permitted such a blemish.

OLD FASHIONED.

St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 18, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 3 DECEMBER 1904*New York Times Book Review:*

"Old Fashioned" is to be congratulated upon the stand he has taken against the language used by the young woman who is the ostensible heroine of *The Eagle's Shadow*. But I do not think that she is one "whom Mr. Cabell evidently considers very nearly an ideal woman." Otherwise he would scarcely have drawn her as an empty-headed, obstinate little virago, whose sole claim to heroineship consists of the fact that she is rather good-looking.

Margaret Hugonin is, unfortunately, quite true to life. There are any number of Margarets to be found anywhere, and she is a type which a very young man might conceivably admire. But after cataloguing "her personal attractions" in the first chapter, Mr. Cabell has not been able to claim for her a single estimable trait. She is vain, she flirts with every man in the book, her temper is ungovernable, and on provocation quite overpowers such wits as she possesses, and, finally, her language in excitement varies between that of the army in Flanders and that of Xantippe. At other times her shrill, silly chatter is quite exasperatingly true to life. The one gleam of common sense I have been able to discover in Margaret flashes out when she says of her lover: "If he'd had any consideration for my feelings he'd have simply smacked me and made me behave." In my humble opinion that was precisely what she needed.

It is not probable that Mr. Cabell drew such a cruelly faithful portrait under the impression that he was depicting a paragon. I have not seen it noticed

anywhere that the book is written in the character of one of Margaret's unsuccessful suitors, but so it purports to be. This explains much. I suspect that in the encomiums which Mr. Cabell bestows so lavishly upon Margaret he is merely speaking "in character," and also indulging in a bit of mystification. At bottom he must be perfectly well aware of the fact that Margaret is a light-headed shrew. All in all the book is astoundingly clever, but its fatal weakness is that it centres about a worthless character.

E. H. B.

New York, Nov, 28, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 10 DECEMBER 1904

I.

New York Times Book Review:

You published a very characteristic letter in your columns last Saturday—that signed "Old Fashioned," in regard to Mr. James Branch Cabell's *Eagle's Shadow*.

The point in regard to the deterioration of our National standards, as exemplified by the language of the American girl of to-day, is an interesting one. But what warrant have we to suppose that in this instance the author intended Margaret Hugonin to be considered as a typical American girl? Are not her doings and language rather personal than those of a type?

I think "Old Fashioned" has overlooked the point that Margaret was reared by men—her mother died

when she was two years old—and that this is not the best possible education for a naturally high-strung girl. After twenty-one years' association with Col. Hugonin, who is represented as swearing quite conversationally, it is not likely that profanity would be to her an unheard-of thing.

I decline to accept Margaret as a type. I would she were, for then she would be more numerous, and I consider Margaret the most fascinating young person I have run across in years. She rings true even when she is most exasperating. *The Eagle's Shadow* is very far from being the Great American Novel, but it at least contains the Great American Girl—not as a type, but as a portrait drawn with an art and fidelity that one recognizes with a grateful thrill. It is all so good and so inexpressibly true that in this time of slipshod work the book comes as a welcome surprise, exacting positive gratitude. It is not precisely plagiarism, but Petheridge Jukesbury is beyond question of the Pecksniff family, while Felix Kennaston is at least first cousin to Harold Skimpole. They are delightful, but it is to be lamented that Mr. Cabell, who has a splendid style of his own, should allow it to become even a trifle reminiscent. The man who could write these stirring chapters of *The Eagle's Shadow* from Margaret's coming out of the summer house to the point where she embraces Jukesbury has no need to depend upon his recollection of other people's work.

WILLIAM A. NESBITT.

Stoneleigh Court, Washington, D. C.,

Nov. 28, 1904.

II.

New York Times Book Review:

I was deeply interested by "Old Fashioned's" criticism of *The Eagle's Shadow*, as published in your columns Nov. 26. In part of it I agree—namely, as to the marvelous cleverness of the book. In that line it is easily the most remarkable thing we have had for a long while. But I am surprised that she—the sex is not mistakable—should have picked out the Cockeye Flinks episode for bitter criticism. Personally, I thought it almost the best in the book—brutally truthful but splendid.

For, lament it as we may, the American girl of our times is not a stranger to profanity. I do not say that she habitually uses it, but merely that she is perfectly conversant with its existence, pace "Old Fashioned." Why shouldn't she be? The day is long past when Scott's Bothwell "uttered an oath too tremendous to be recorded." You will find plenty of profanity in our latter-day novels, and when the language of the author's characters grows especially forceful, only a few of the magazines resort to a mock-modest big, big D trailing an innocent dash behind it. Is the American girl not supposed to read these effusions? Or does she stick to Scott? It would be an excellent thing if she did, but as a matter of fact she does not.

No. Margaret Hugonin is none of those slope-shouldered ladies who were wont in three-volume days to swoon in time of trouble and remain unconscious until the vinaigrettes and burned feathers were fetched in. These ladies had ink in their veins, but this one

boasts good red blood. For I cordially consider that the author has drawn Margaret Hugonin's character with strokes of positive genius. And the intense revulsion in this scene from her normal character is precisely the point of the scene, the staggering, magnificent point. To the reader it is at the time like a bucket of cold water dashed in his face, but upon reflection it emerges as the only possible thing that Margaret in the given circumstances would say and do. Her conduct is not dignified or praiseworthy or even ladylike, but it is quite unutterably human. And immediately after the author's scalpel has probed so unerringly, the fly incident, on which he evidently counted for much, came rather as an anti-climax. I suspect that fly of having crawled out of *The House with the Seven Gables*. Still, the incident is horrible, and aids in sustaining the tension of the scene. I think no reader—if you will pardon the quip—will quarrel with this fly in the pure amber of *The Eagle's Shadow*.

J. V. A.

New Haven, Conn., Dec. 1, 1904.

III.

New York Times Book Review:

"Old Fashioned's" letter concerning *The Eagle's Shadow* interested me greatly, but that of "E. H. B." filled me with joy, for it went straight to the root of a matter which has perplexed me of late not a little. About six weeks ago I read the book in question, and read it with enthusiasm. Here at last a certain type

of American girl had gotten into a book. For Margaret Hugonin is quite startlingly real, and the portrait is drawn with such bitter and at times brutal veracity that the effect is almost painful. To draw such a personality as seen through the eyes of her lover and yet allow no whit of its triviality and meanness to escape in the process appeared to me little short of genius. In my ignorance I viewed the book as a remarkable though cruel bit of realism.

I say ignorance, for a day or two later I learned from a review of *The Eagle's Shadow* that it was a fascinating comedy with an adorable heroine. This I confess staggered me, and since I have read every review of it I have come across. THE TIMES critic, I am glad to say, avoided the pitfall; the others, to a man, have either praised the book as a dainty little idyll or objected that Margaret is too good and lovely ever to have worn merely human flesh. And this with her vanity and ignorance and violent passions and perfectly unbridled temper and shameless profanity writ large on every page! Now *The Eagle's Shadow* is of necessity "caviare to the general," but I had not previously realized that to be subtle was so dangerous. I respectfully submit that dissection, whatever else it may be, is not idyllic, and that *The Eagle's Shadow* is first and last and always the dissection of a virago. As such it is a masterly piece of work. If it were intended to be sugared romance, according to the consensus of critical opinion, I can only assume that Mr. Cabell's brain works like a grindstone and showers brilliancy without realizing it. I see by one of the Saturday papers that "women will like the book, fancying themselves in the part of the heroine." Well, in that case they would

like *Madame Bovary* for the same reason and read *Middlemarch* for the pleasure of fancying themselves Rosamund Vincy.

FRANK L. MARSDEN.

New York, Dec. 6, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 17 DECEMBER 1904

I.

New York Times Book Review:

My previous letter, in which I pointed out the fact that the heroine of *The Eagle's Shadow* had no particular claim to toleration, much less respect, seems to have aroused a hornets' nest. I stick to my colors, and I would leave the decision to any fair-minded person were it possible to quote here a few specimens of Miss Hugonin's language in her moments of irritation. Unfortunately THE TIMES motto, "All the News that's Fit to Print," very emphatically forbids this, so I content myself with stating that a foul-mouthed vixen is not a particularly endearing character. You cannot argue this any more than you can argue the fact that two and two make four. Under no provocation would a gentlewoman resort to profanity, since by that act she at once forfeits all claim to be considered a gentlewoman—who is, according to the dictionary, "one of superior social training and deportment." Now, that oaths are not ordinarily the concomitants of superior deportment I respectfully submit. Margaret Hugonin is not, and is not intended to be, a gentlewoman. Her character is drawn too vividly for there to be any doubt

about this. She is simply, as I previously stated, an empty-headed, obstinate virago, with very little decency either in speech or conduct, and as such a spirited character sketch. But viewed as a heroine she is a mistake, whereas viewed as "a fascinating young person" she is, with all possible respect to Mr. Nesbitt, a conception to stagger humanity.

EMMETT H. BROUGH.

New York, Dec. 12, 1904.

II.

New York Times Book Review:

You never printed a more interesting symposium than that on Saturday concerning *The Eagle's Shadow*. The book appears to have impressed so many people and so variously that I am irresistibly tempted to add my quota to the discussion. Personally what most impressed me was the quaint and felicitous daintiness of style with which the tale is told, but the argument seems rather to centre about Margaret Hugonin's claim, not merely to heroineship but to common respectability. And I must protest that in my humble opinion "Old Fashioned" and "E. H. B." and Mr. Marsden have all been too hard upon the young lady.

Peggy is just a very vain young woman with an extremely high temper and an abundance of yellow hair and dimples—the sort that men unite to adore and women to discuss. She is just a frank, wholesome American girl, a little prettier than most girls and perfectly aware of the fact. She has a host of faults which in theory are lamentable, and in practice irre-

sistible. And as for the "meanness and triviality" of her character, it appears to have been left out of my particular copy of *The Eagle's Shadow*, for there I find her the most charming young woman who ever got into print since *When Knighthood was in Flower* made its appearance. She uses improper language on occasion—as did Mr. John Luther Long's *Naughty Nan*, and any of us with eyes and ears in our heads know that nine women out of ten would have done the same. The tortured soul does not stand upon questions of etiquette. Peggy swore, and Peggy, even in her profanity, is adorable, just as the sun has spots on it and manages to dispense a great deal of illumination for all that. The prudish minded who quarrel with her action have their real quarrel with human nature and should remember Stevenson's fable, *The Four Reformers*, with its moral that the only way to bring about perfection here on earth is to abolish mankind.

CHARLES MORTON DENT.

New York, Dec. 13, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 24 DECEMBER 1904

I.

New York Times Book Review:

The criticism of *The Eagle's Shadow* by "Old Fashioned" shows conclusively ignorance of the habits, ideas, and refinements of the girls of 1904. It does not do to look backward for our types of what a female should now be, since progress in everything is the watchword and to lose sight of sex the fashion. A

woman feels, if she desires to be a success, she must be an athlete, a sport, a huntress, and able to hold her own as a good fellow with her men associates. It is sad, but no less true, that at the card table and punch bowl she is as ready to do her duty as the men, and can enjoy the cigarette with equal gusto, so Mr. Cabell added only an oath to make his heroine Margaret fill up the measure of requirements; otherwise she is sparkling, brilliant, and so fascinating as to win the hearts of old and young, minus the Eagle, which serves to shadow her path so long as she is its possessor; and if she does soil her pretty lips with a big, big D, remembering her many sweetnesses of looks, ways, and deeds, surely we may hope the Recording Angel will, as he did for Uncle Toby, drop a tear upon the ugly word and blot it out forever. But Margaret is not by any means the strongest character or an exponent of Mr. Cabell's best work. His genius is shown to be most striking in the very forcible drawing of Fred R. Woods, the visible philanthropist, and the invisible Shylock. For a dissection of human nature, its follies and weaknesses, Mr. Cabell has skill of the first order. On pages 230 and 231 the moral drawn over the shoulders of Charles Dickens alone would make Mr. Cabell's book highly valuable, if the volume possessed but little other matter, for, as he says, "This is very crude and very cynical, but unfortunately it is true."

The Eagle's Shadow gives promise of great future work, for if, like wine, the author's talents improve with time, he bids fair to make a great name in the line of a writer of fiction.

L. P. B.

New York, Dec. 18, 1904.

New York Times Book Review:

In answer to Mr. Marsden's letter in regard to *The Eagle's Shadow* I would like to point out the fact the book is advertised on its cover as "a fascinating comedy" with "an irresistible heroine." Does this not demonstrate pretty clearly that he has overestimated Mr. Cabell's subtlety and that the book is intended simply as "sugared romance"?

C. H. ROLLINS.

New York, Dec. 19, 1904.

III.

New York Times Book Review:

Does not all this discussion of the merits and demerits of *The Eagle's Shadow* flavor of the tempestuous teapot? [Ah! Peggy, where is that peace of mind you hoped to discover in self-renunciation?] Alas! it is as if a few words of one syllable had unlocked the flood-gates of that notoriety in adulation or vituperation which she thought would disappear with the relinquishment of riches. In all respect to the author and his silken style, what more are Mistress Peggy and company than so many manikins that answer a trifle too willingly to a twitch of the string? But, after all, why say "too willingly," since what we have is a very soap bubble of a story, altogether charming in its momentary iridescence? Why do we judge this novelette save for what it obviously is—thistledown, sea foam, if you will, but certainly not "unleavened bread" or "the wings of a dove," nor with any pretension of so being.

With a precocity not unlike that of Le Gallienne in his early manner, we are taken into the author's confidence. It is with him that we are asked to enjoy the tripping measures of his marionettes, their euphuistic repartee, their mirthful misery, their delightful what-not, and so, when Margaret becomes indelicate (shall we say) in her abandonment to primitive passion, why deny the secret amusement, though the deacons in our company may try to elevate the brows—and fail? Plot, personages—mise en scène—all are so deliciously unreal that, when we cavil over verbal lapses (or however you wish to qualify the peccadillo), it is as though we were genuinely distressed by the paintings of Boucher which represent nymphs (in most unconventional *déshabille*) consorting with the powdered dandies of Versailles. There are those, perhaps, who have never concealed a smile at the expense of Jane Austen's gentlewomen or our Cooper's helpless "females"; in such, of course, is excusable an actual horror over the utterance by feminine lips of the unprintable word. Surely, however, there are some others who gauge by a different critical standard Laurence Sterne and John Bunyan, or, rather, who use the same standard but with a certain critical acumen. But, of course, all this does not prove that our Margaret is a gentlewoman. For Billy's sake I must earnestly hope that she is; but I trust that such qualifications as "superior social training" are no longer regarded as the essentials in dictionaries or in life. Oaths, I hear, are no longer caviare in the mouths of our soi-disant "society" arbiters. But let us forget the foibles of Miss Hugonin—heroine or otherwise. Rather let us leave her glad that her Christmas shopping is at an end and

that oath-inducing crowds will not congregate for another year.

RICHARD B. GLAENZER.

New York, Dec. 19, 1904.

IV.

New York Times Book Review:

I have read with much interest the controversy being waged in your valuable columns over the heroine of Mr. Cabell's novel *The Eagle's Shadow*, and I should like to join the protest against the somewhat harsh criticism of Margaret Hugonin. I am inclined to say that Margaret might make a man use some profanity, but she would never make him yawn.

I don't know if "Old Fashioned," who began this amiable discussion of *The Eagle's Shadow*, is a Virginian or not, but, speaking for the younger Virginians, may I say that there is not one of us who would not be willing to be sworn at if the swearing were done by so lovely a creature as Margaret. And since fiction should be a faithful reflection of life, why should Margaret be condemned? If Margaret had had a husband at the time of the strenuous verbal performance which has caused all this discussion, I have no doubt that he would have been delighted to swear for her.

Margaret typifies the independent spirit of the American girl in fiction. I am sure that even her detractors would not be willing to exchange her for one of the namby-pamby, hysterical feminine misfits of the old-time novels who wept when in anger and who collapsed

when they thought of a swear word. There is no affectation in Margaret; she is sweet and tender and one of the loveliest of the recent sisterhood of fiction, and, too, I should like to add that Mr. Cabell's book seems to me to be the most promising first book by any American author in many a day, and no phase of his cleverness is more marked than his interpretation of Margaret Hugonin, to know whom is a liberal education in grace and beauty and naturalness.

YOUNG VIRGINIAN.

New York, Dec. 20, 1904.

V.

New York Times Book Review:

I should have thought *The Eagle's Shadow* would have been the very last book among the Autumn publications to cause a newspaper controversy. It is no mean tribute to the intelligence of THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW's readers that a book such as the casual observer would consider far and away above the head of the public should have awakened such interest among them. But Mr. Brough is right—the selection of Margaret Hugonin as a heroine is a mistake on the part of the author, and a mistake which all his wit and stylistic agilities cannot quite conceal. I do not base this assertion simply upon her profanity, for in a situation so intense as that in dispute there can exist no rules of propriety. You had as well say Hamlet is no gentleman because in the stabbing scene he applies epithets to his uncle which were unquestionably out of

place at a tea party. Nevertheless Margaret is a vicious minx and emphatically not a woman of breeding.

A gentlewoman, for example, does not reply to a decent man's wooing: "No, you tipsy old brute," or even with the languid statement: "You make me awfully tired." Nor is any woman who shrieks insults and malice and contumely in the face of a man who happens not to be in love with her calculated to adorn any society more elevated than that of a reformatory. The lines depicting Margaret's character are fiendishly real, but so far from being fit for heroineship the young woman is not even qualified for decent society.

G. G.

New York, Dec. 20, 1904.

VI.

New York Times Book Review:

Most of your readers admit that *The Eagle's Shadow* is brilliant, but equally so upon the surface is the scum of a stagnant pool. The book exhibits a degradation in morals, a degradation in ethics, a degradation in the standards of true womanliness that I can parallel in nothing short of the Restoration comedies of infamous memory. To those who consider it "sugared romance" I can only repeat Billy Woods's admonition: "You ought to be locked up in some nice, quiet stable, where your heehawing wouldn't disturb people. You need a keeper, you do." Since Swift we have had nothing which makes you so vehemently snigger even while you blush at the frailties of humanity.

S. L. YECK.

New York, Dec. 19, 1904.

VII.

New York Times Book Review:

Veracity compels me to admit that while *The Eagle's Shadow* is clever I cannot see that there is much to be praised in the book. I should be sorry to think that Margaret Hugonin is anything more than a gross caricature of certain wealthy and skittish young women. The entire book is caricature, and surely no unusual penetration is required to discover this. Seriously, to contend that it is either reality or "sugared romance" is to concede that the author's elaborate endeavors have successfully hoodwinked you. The book is a piece of caricature, scoffing at certain abuses of modern society and doing so effectively, if you can bring yourself to the point where decent restraint and honorable motives are considered fit subjects for a jester's pen.

C. DUVAL HANKINS.

New York, Dec. 19, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 31 DECEMBER 1904

New York Times Book Review:

When I read a book I do it for pleasure. Is there the slightest enjoyment to be obtained from reading *The Eagle's Shadow*? The principal character, Miss Hugonin, is about as disagreeable a person as one can imagine; she is not only selfish and jealous, but also vulgar to the last degree. To be sure, she is true to life; but the better her character is drawn the more disagreeable the book becomes. Since every one of

us is obliged to come in contact with such a large number of ill-bred people, why can we not leave them out of our novels?

THOMAS W. DONALD.

New York, Dec. 27, 1904.

NEW YORK TIMES, 7 JANUARY 1905

I.

New York Times Book Review:

If *The Eagle's Shadow* had been a bit of real life it could not have been interpreted with greater dissension of opinion. The most remarkable fact in connection with the uniformly remarkable debate it has occasioned in your valuable columns is that no two readers appear to have reached conclusions even remotely resembling one another. Now I can state only my own opinion, and it is that the book is a pernicious one.

Mr. Glaenzer advances a dangerous fallacy when he claims it must be considered as Lamb considers the comedies of the Restoration—as unmoral proceedings in an unmapped Utopia of gallantry. This is a kindly explanation, but its value is somewhat vitiated by the fact that it is obviously absurd. The scene is the Virginia of to-day, and the characters are very far from being marionettes. On the contrary, they are one and all degraded specimens of humanity, very vividly drawn. I grant that the book is clever, but I cannot commend a cleverness that can find no better exercise than to jeer at human nature, and, moreover, at every

attempt to better human nature. Charity may have its parasites, philanthropy may have its parasites, but that is no reason for exhibiting these virtues in an ignoble light. To cite one instance in many, no one who has read the Van Vorst book will consider the present condition of child labor in the South a fit subject for jesting, and to make fun of an attempt to cleanse this blot from the Nation's name is not far from being a crime. The same holds true of the noble work of our foreign missions, of the great modern movement toward a more intimate comprehension of nature, and of various twentieth century endeavors toward the extirpation of vice and ignorance—in none of which can Mr. Cabell see more than an ingenious method whereby a parcel of hypocrites swindle a silly young woman. To call the story "thistledown" and "seafoam," and so on is to beg the question, for to render virtue ridiculous is materially to abet the cause of vice. I do not for a moment suppose that the young author intended this, but years will bring him the knowledge that in such a connection flippancy is misplaced. Concerning Margaret Hugonin I have already expressed my opinion, which is that a good complexion does not excuse bad morals or a fair mouth foul words. It may be we have progressed beyond "Jane Austen's gentlewomen and Cooper's helpless 'females,'" but if this leads to a condonation of profanity and bestial rage as peculiarly ladylike traits, the progress is scarcely toward improvement.

EMMETT H. BROUGH.

New York, Dec. 26, 1904.

II.

New York Times Book Review:

Of all your many interesting debates from readers that concerning *The Eagle's Shadow* is easily pre-eminent in interest. And I should like here to venture a suggestion as to what in my opinion is the real root of argument.

It is that the book marks the passing of the heroine. She was such a dear, ladylike creature that it is no wonder some of us cannot bear to see her go. The novel heroine early crystallized in the character of Fielding's Amelia, and since then Amelia has ruled English fiction. You find her in Scott, disguised it may be in mediæval trappings, but under them always Capt. Booth's tender wife. You will see her in Dickens under various aliases, and in Thackeray she comes forward boldly as Amelia, with a perfectly transparent affectation of being named Sedley and not Booth. In practically every English novel she appears, bearing various names, indeed, but always gentle and clinging and faithful, and in fine, always Amelia. She is the tyrant of English literature undethronable. For over a century the rule has been unquestioned. Your novel may treat of almost anything, your hero and villain may be what you will, but your heroine must be Amelia. And now Margaret Hugonin pops into fiction and naturally flutters the sedate. It is against all tradition that the heroine of a novel should even remotely resemble any woman that ever wore flesh and blood. She must be Amelia, says Mrs. Grundy.

I think that the real importance of *The Eagle's*

Shadow lies in the fact that Margaret is very emphatically not Amelia. Margaret is a real woman, commendable or not as you please, but a real woman; and while we have had many real women in novels, hide-bound tradition shies at the notion of having a real woman as a heroine. It is so unusual. Candidly, is that not the true motive which actuates Margaret's detractors—irritation caused not so much by her being what she is as by her failing to be an Amelia woman? We are a people of enduring tradition, and to some of us this endeavor to plump a mere human being into the high seat immemorially sacred to that dear, ladylike creature, the heroine, must necessarily savor of blasphemy.

ALFRED H. GALE.

New York, Dec. 30, 1904.

III.

New York Times Book Review:

I do not agree with Mr. Thomas W. Donald in his opinion of *The Eagle's Shadow*, published Dec. 31. I have enjoyed the book immensely, and fail to see why the heroine should be called "vulgar to the last degree." I think the heroine is truer to nature than those in most novels which have a perfect woman for the heroine, and, if any one is ever justified in swearing, Miss Hugonin certainly is in the one instance in which she does so. Admit that she has a temper of her own. Does that necessarily show that she is vulgar? Taking into account she is a hot-blooded Southern girl and that

her father often swore before her, it is perfectly natural that she should do so. Her mother having died when she was yet a baby, she had never been taught that it was wrong. I think, on the whole, the book is very interesting.

H. HOOKER ACHESON.

Baltimore, Jan. 2, 1905.

NEW YORK TIMES, 14 JANUARY 1905

New York Times Book Review:

Since Mr. Acheson has set the example I likewise venture to differ with Mr. Thomas W. Donald in his opinion of *The Eagle's Shadow*. He asks what conceivable pleasure can be derived from reading this particular book. The answer is simple. If you have any ear for the niceties of prose, if your notions as to what constitutes good prose are somewhat more exacting than those of M. Jourdain, if in a word you so far differ from the average novel reader as to prefer well-written books to badly written books—why, in that case, you will find *The Eagle's Shadow* both a surprise and a delight. Viewed purely and simply from a stylistic standpoint the book is a little miracle, crammed to overflowing with examples of the curiosa felicitas of diction. Viewed as prose, quite irrespective of the story, the book is a notable achievement. And in that it comes unheralded it is doubly notable and at least triply welcome.

At the risk of being blue penciled I cite an example: "They came presently with desultory chat to a meadow bravely decked in all the gauds of spring. About

them the day was clear, the air bland. Spring had revamped her ageless fripperies of tender leaves and birdcries and sweet, warm odors for the adornment of this meadow; above it she had set a turkis sky splashed here and there with little clouds that were like whipped cream; and upon it she had scattered largesse, a Danae's shower of buttercups. And about them the shadow of the maple leaves made a little island of sombre green around which more vivid grasses rippled and dimpled under the fitful spring breezes. And everywhere leaves lisped to one another and birds shrilled insistently."

You cannot find a flaw in that, you cannot even suggest an improvement. And it is only a sample. Passage after passage, page after page, you come upon these bits of impeccable writing. At times the diction is almost too ingenious, almost too preciose, but always it is splendid, always finished *ad unguem*. And at times you run across passages that scarcely forward the tale's action, that are merely fantastic interludes done from the author's sheer love for juggling words. For example, I might cite the chapter relating to the contents of Margaret's wardrobe or that containing Kennaston's essay. Irrelevant these, but then, how delicious to one who has a sense of the *mot propre*.

Yet, after all, there are many perfectly intelligent persons who, through unavoidable defects either in taste or education, have nothing of the sort. I do not know whether Mr. Donald sides with the majority in preferring upon the whole slovenly writing. For writing seems to be the only art in which immediate success is quite independent of whether the work done be good or bad. We do not, for example, commend

a painter for slapping paint upon his canvas haphazard, whereas we very often praise an author for "manly, straightforward writing," which is usually a synonym for a precisely similar botchery. Possibly Mr. Donald has that taste for "manly, straightforward writing"—seen at its perfection in the *Nick Carter Series*—which is shared by so many excellent people. I express no opinion as to this, as I have no opportunity of forming an opinion. But in any event I can scarcely believe him to be serious in his expressed wish to exclude all disagreeable people from fiction. Even the classic simplicity of diction that characterizes the detective story is occasionally devoted to the villain's exploits. And to rule out from library shelves each and every book that contains an unpleasant character would necessitate a rather drastic overhauling of English literature. Shakespeare of course would have to go, whereas Milton, who actually wrote of the devil, would be burned, I suppose, by the hangman. There is entertaining work for the imagination in conceiving all literature Bowdlerized upon this basis.

R. L. YEATS.

New York, Jan. 9, 1905.

Here the correspondence appears to have terminated. Probably at about this time the editors noticed the idiocy of the entire affair. . . .

Now it is grievous to have to admit that, in revising this book, it has been the complimentary bits of the letters just quoted in full which have

seemed to the author of *The Eagle's Shadow* rather especially ill-balanced. Yet this—to-day—surprising debate (one rather wonders, to-day, about just what) must be presented in its entirety if one is really to get at its moral. And that moral is, to the considerate person, invaluable.

It would be easy enough, heaven knows, here to wax flippant over "the insult to American womanhood," "the lamentable deterioration of our National standards," and the literary requirements of "decent society" in 1904. One might with safety even venture into patronizing merriment over any criteria by which *The Eagle's Shadow* could be esteemed over-opulent in "brutal veracity," or be found "to jeer at human nature and at every attempt to better human nature," and "materially to abet the cause of vice." And one really does not think anybody anywhere will to-day agree that *The Eagle's Shadow* "exhibits a degradation in morals, a degradation in ethics, a degradation in the standards of true womanliness, that one can parallel in nothing short of the Restoration comedies of infamous memory."

But the point of these wild sayings is not, really, their ludicrousness. The point is that all these things were once written about this book, in utter good faith, by estimable and well-meaning persons.

To-day, of course, these complaints seem obsolete

and most pathetic. For *The Eagle's Shadow* is now twenty years old; and during that twenty years nobody has in any way restrained its contaminating influence. Yet still does public morality flourish, and, indeed, is yearly enriched with a yet more luxuriant flowering of fantastic legislation and censorship and tribal taboos: and still some civilisation of a sort remains to us. In ethical and practical affairs, the republic is, past dispute, bearing up nicely under twenty years of *The Eagle's Shadow*. And in literary fields the one and wholly unimportant difference which time has wrought is that such lamentations as have hereinbefore been quoted relative to *The Eagle's Shadow* are to-day being written and declaimed about other books.

Well, the point is that these lamentations are inveterate and eternally unsilenceable. The wailings of to-day's self-nominated literary critics match wonderfully, as you have seen, with those of some twenty years ago. And twenty years hence—then, too, one knows,—precisely these same elegies must be upraised for murdered decency, in discussing the books of auctorial embryos who go as yet in short trousers.

But one also knows that the now current protests of to-day's best-meaning and most estimable persons against to-day's alarming literary tendencies will then—assuming some antiquary to be then at

pains thus to exhume the ghastly relics of the godly, —will then have taken on the obsolete and most pathetic flavor of this now incredible pother about *The Eagle's Shadow*.

In that inevitable obsolescence is our consolation: but the moral is in the pathos.

THE END

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